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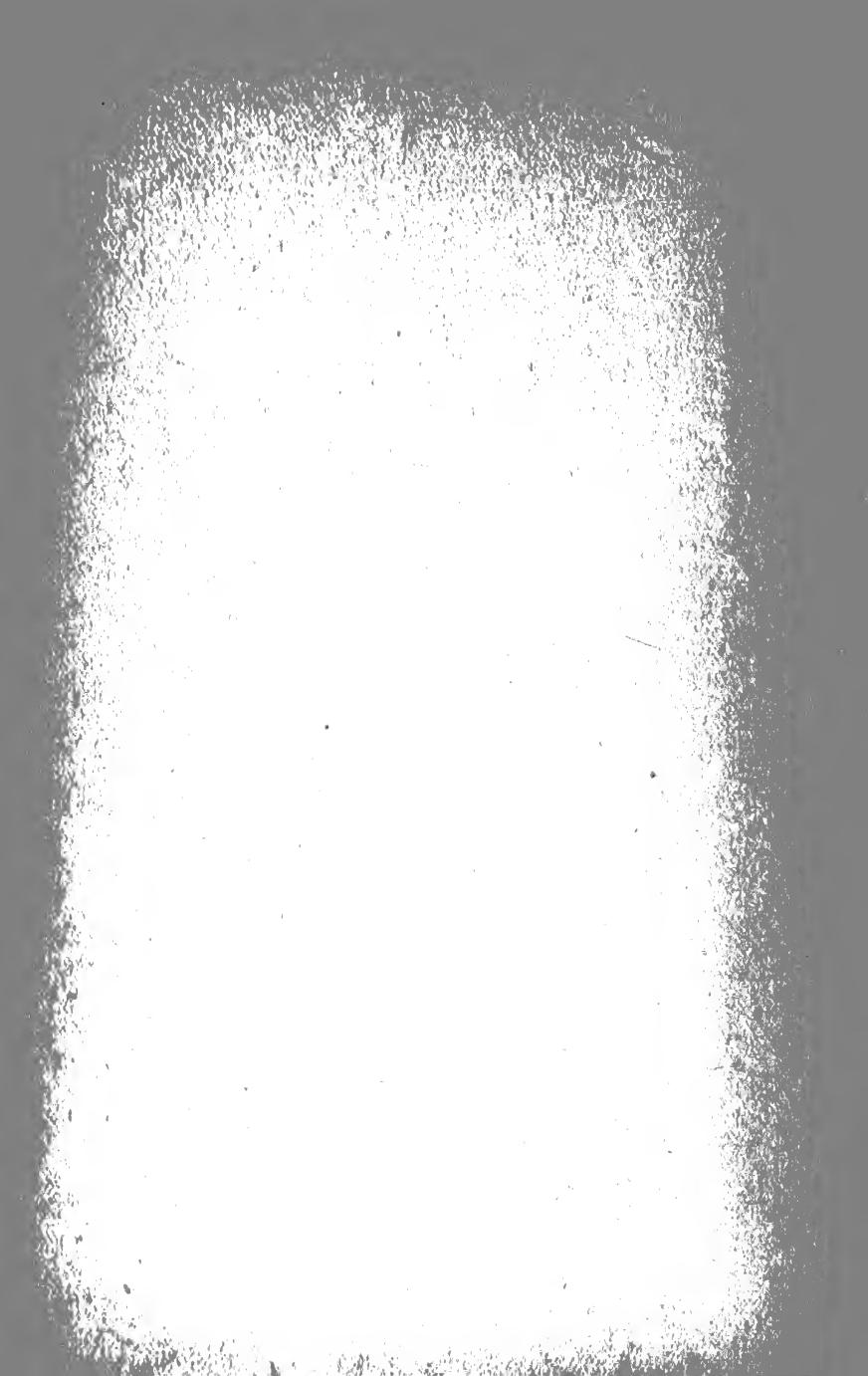


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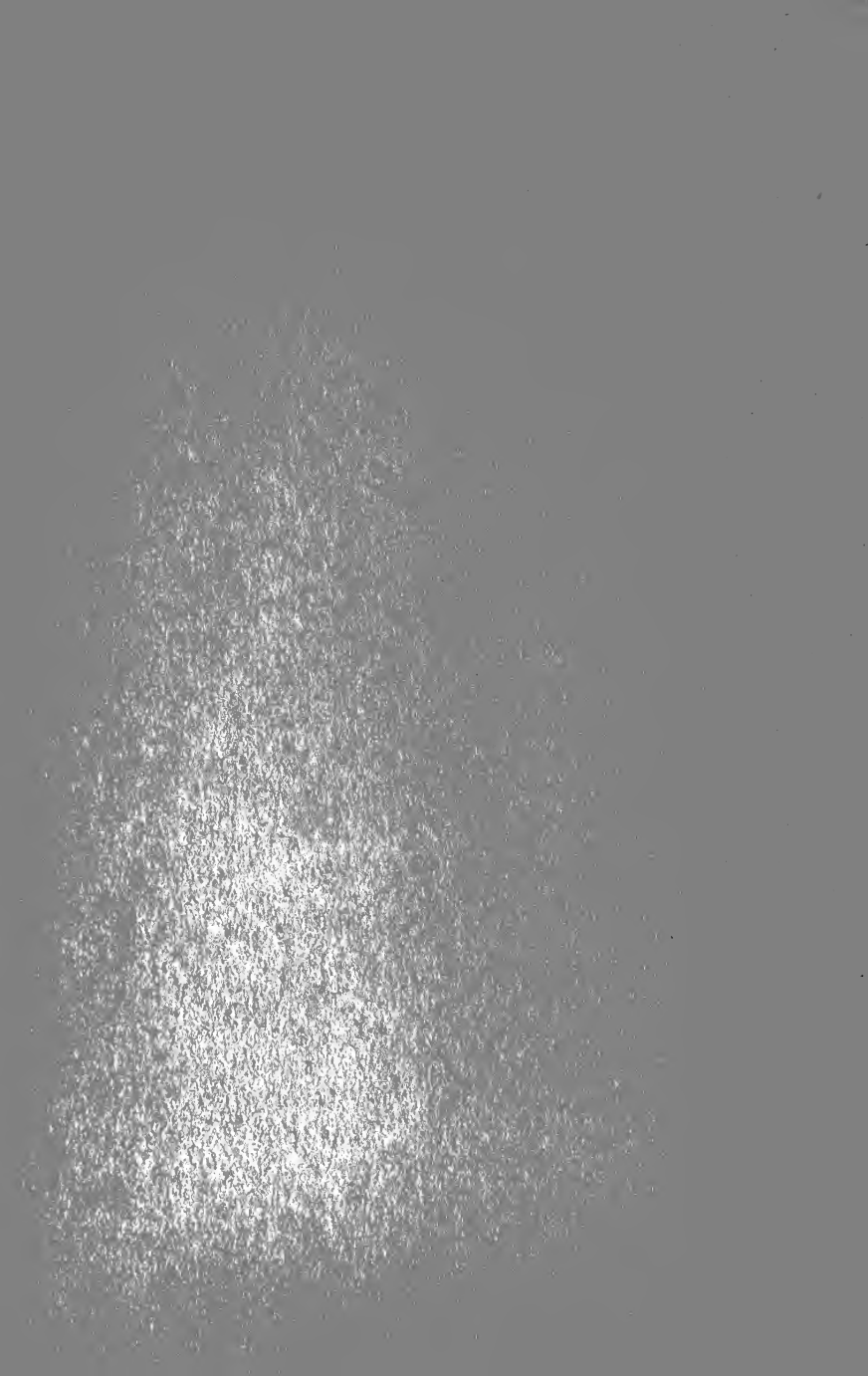
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Dean Swift





Jonathan Swift

From a picture by Charles Jervas in the National Portrait Gallery

Dublin

Dean Swift

A Drama

In Four Scenes, Four Acts and an Epilogue.

Period of Queen Anne, 1716

ELEANOR CORDE, Author

— 1 —
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Foreword

In the 18th century, during the troubled reign of Queen Anne, an obscure Irish clergyman arrived in London. But when it became known that he was the author of "The Battle of the Books" both Whigs and Tories fought for the aid of his powerful pen.

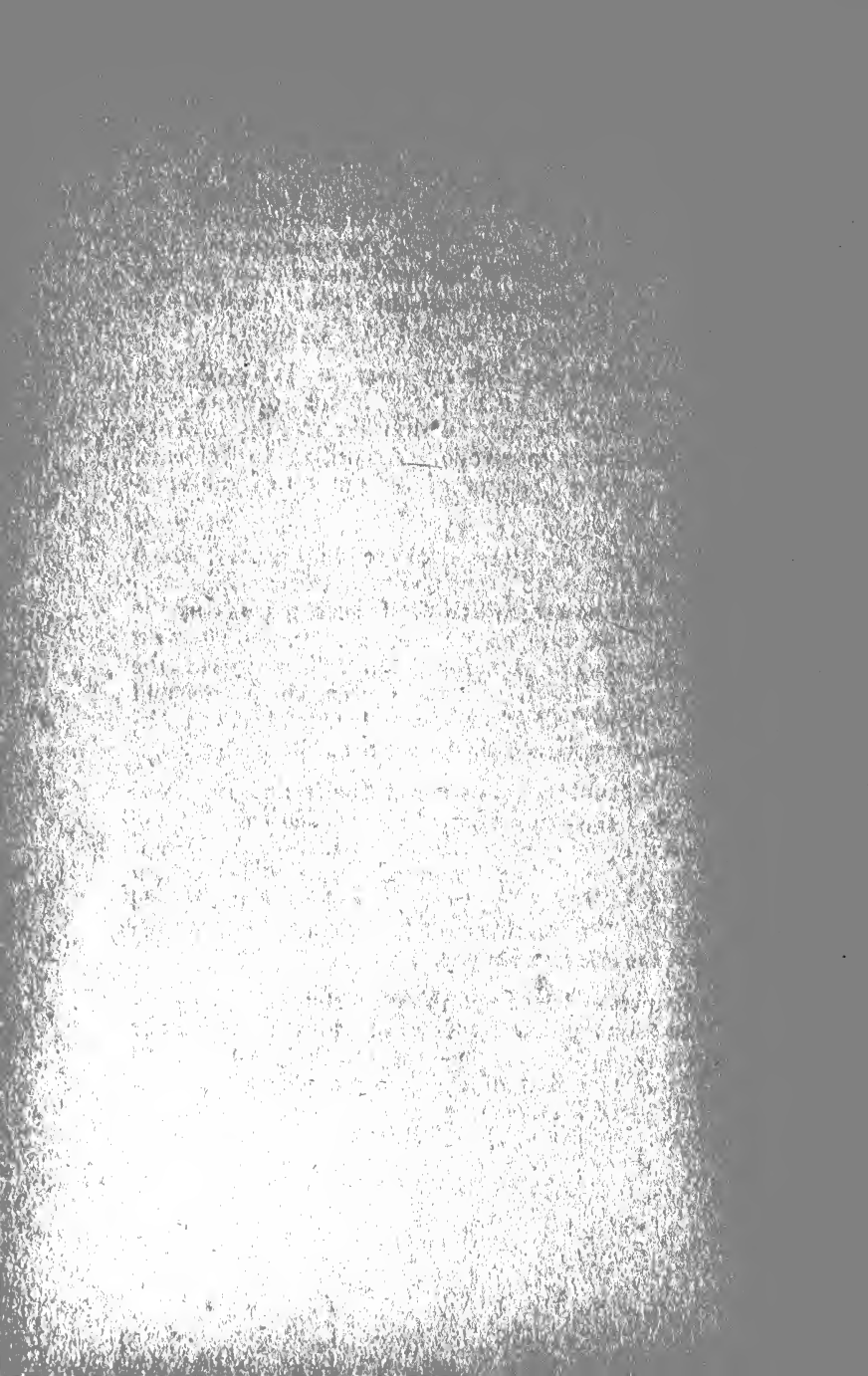
Now, JONOTHAN SWIFT was a Whig—but a Churchman first. So he threw in his fortunes with the Tories and became, within six months, a Tory Chief without a portfolio. According to Johnson, "Swift was the Dictator of the politics of the English nation."

For reward, the Premier offered him money, which Swift refused with scorn; with flattery, which also failed; with power; which Swift accepted, taking the helm of State into his own hands. In the eloquent language of *The London Times*, "Swift was the Government; Swift was the Queen, the Lords and the Commons." And had Anne listened less to back-stair influence, Swift had died a spiritual Peer.

Two splendid women loved Swift and he loved both. But to discover how he rewarded each has remained a mystery—the despair of historians, becoming for the past two hundred years a never-failing source for debate—as lively a topic for the world as though the three actors in the splendid drama walked the streets of today.

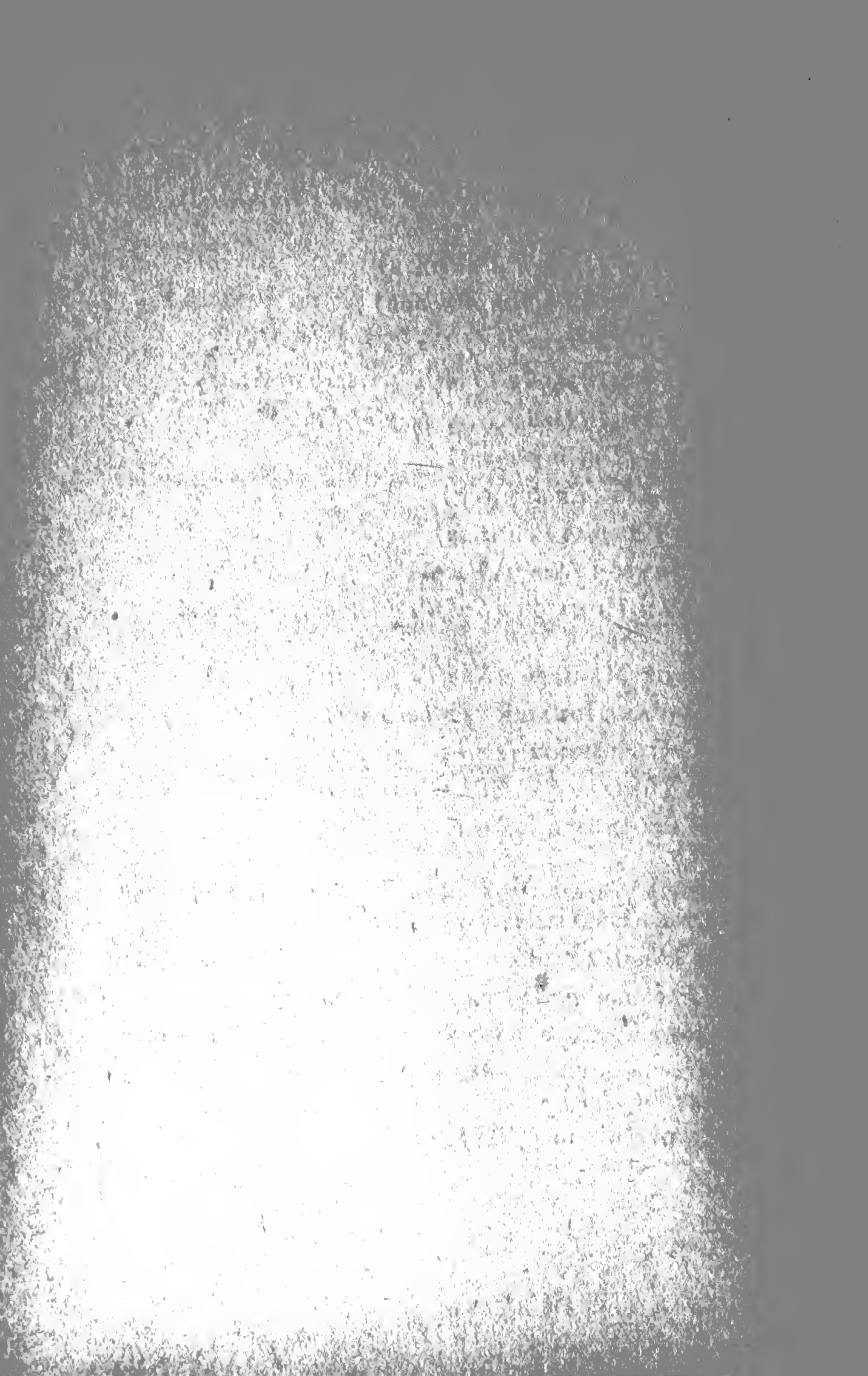
This play is based upon that mystery—the identity of the woman that Swift really loved; the author solving it by its results—the wrecking of Swift's happiness and that of the two women who so devotedly loved him.

—E. C.



PERSONS IN THE PLAY

- JONOTHAN SWIFT (*Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral
Dublin*)
- CHARLES FORD (*Dublin gentleman*)
- RICHARD HAYES (*English dragoon*)
- LORD OXFORD (*Treasurer of the Tory ministry*)
- VISCOMPTE BOLINBROKE (*Tory Secretary of State*)
- ERASMUS LEWIS (*Under Secretary of State*)
- DR. DELANY (*Dublin patriot*)
- LORD LOVELACE (*English fop*)
- HARCOURT (*English Politician*)
- STELLA JOHNSON (*Swift's ward*)
- ESTHER VAN HOMRIGH (*Swift's London friend and
pupil*)
- DUCHESS OF MARLBRO (*Swift's political enemy*)
- MISTRESS VAN HOMRIGH (*Esther's mother*)
- MOLLY VAN HOMRIGH (*Esther's sister*)
- MISTRESS DINGLEY (*Swift's house-keeper*)
- LADIES TATTLETON AND NETTLETON (*Of the English
Court*)
- MISSTRESSES WALSH AND GRANNAN (*Her twin girls*) and
MISTRESS DELANY (*Of Dublin*)
- PATRICK (*Swift's peasant-servant*)
- JEEMS (*Footman in the Von Homrigh home*)
- PRECEPTOR AND CHORISTERS (*Of St. Patrick's Cathedral*)
- Duchess' mute servant, lords and ladies, footmen,
(*All of London*)
- Lord Mayor, citizens (*All of Dublin*)



ACT I.

SITTING-ROOM IN THE DEANERY OF ST. PATRICK'S
CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN. SUNNY MORNING
IN APRIL, 1716

ACT II.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE VAN HOMRIGH HOME, LONDON.
THREE MONTHS LATER

ACT III.

LORD OXFORD'S GARDENS, LONDON. EVENING OF SAME
DAY

ACT IV. (Scene First)

SITTING-ROOM OF THE DEANERY. TWO MONTHS LATER

ACT IV. (Scene Second)

(*Instant Rise of Curtain.*) SACRISTY OF ST. PATRICK'S
CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN

EPILOGUE

SITTING-ROOM OF THE DEANERY. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
LATER

Dean Swift

ACT FIRST

Scene, Sitting-room in the Deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Ireland. Sunny morning in April, 1716.

A shallow room taking up the entire width of stage. The entrance door 1, at left, opens inward, showing a bit of green lawn beyond. Above this door is a two-paned window, opening against inner wall. Door 2 at back-centre, up few shallow steps, opens out into a room, shows a table and few chairs, supposed to be the dining-room. Door 3 at right, opens outward onto a corridor. To right of door 1 is a quaintly-carved mantel-shelf holding vases of simple flowers. Beneath this shelf are several wooden pegs that serve as a hat-rack. The open fire-place below is filled with green boughs. Down right-front is a wire stand of blooming plants. Beyond this a wooden settee. To right of door 2 is a hanging shelf. On it several volumes simply bound, a short, yellow silken curtain half-drawn over same. A large round table drawn front-centre holds ink-pot, quills, sand-box, a large ledger and a pile of coins. On a wooden chair to right of table is a large wicker basket filled with simple aprons, little knitted shawls, a pair of children's shoes, a frilled muslin cap and a pair of clumsy men's boots. At left of table is the only rich-looking article in sight—Swift's massively-framed, velvet-covered arm-chair,

its back rising into a quaint twist. A simply quaintly-furnished, attractive room, but almost hinting of poverty.

At rise. STELLA JOHNSON, aged twenty-two, stands at the table intent on a page of the ledger and the different articles in the basket. In an age of powder and beauty-spots she wears neither. Brown-haired, lovely, simply dressed, her face wears a pleased smile, and though she is English, her animated manner suggests the Latin.

MISTRESS DINGLEY, Swift's house-keeper, aged forty, in black dress, black apron and keys at belt, with gray hair primly tucked into a mob cap, sits grim-visaged, off to right, working on a large white cotton square while she watches her companion with disapproving looks.

DINGLEY.

Chut—pish—. Botherin' yer head, child, wi' that basket—. When Swift's beggars shud be seekin' work an' not clutterin' up the Deanery steps for something to cover their nakedness—. Sure—to go naked shud be teachin' em' a lesson—

STELLA.

[Consulting ledger and picking up articles.] Two knitted shawls—there should be three—Ah—here's the third—

DINGLEY.

Chut—pah! *[Holding up square.]* See, Stella, child—

STELLA.

Three aprons—two caps—. What is it, Dingley, dear?

DINGLEY.

Why—this square—finished at last and am that glad—
Ah-h-h—

STELLA.

[*Teasingly.*] 'Tis a gift for that gossiping friend o'
yours 'cross the channel—who writes you those l-o-n-g
letters!

DINGLEY.

Aye—'tis for Mistress White, o' Lunnun. [*Sighingly*]
Ah-h-h—

STELLA.

London's like heaven—isn't it, Dingley, dear?

DINGLEY.

Aye—'tis what I've thought sin' we've come to live
here in Dublin. A-h—me!

STELLA.

An apron for the little Widow Mac—this frilled cap
for Granny O'Toole—[*putting on cap roguishly.*] An'
how d'ye like me, Dingley, dear?

DINGLEY.

Chut—pish—bah! Wi' Swift's grannies and his
widows! 'Tis no wonder they crowd round him in the
streets to knale an' kiss his hand—for what? But to get
frilled caps an' aprons! 'Tis said that Swift buys up all
their nadles and pins an' gives 'em back to some "poor
widdy" at the very next corner—

STELLA.

A shawl for old Stumphanympa—

DINGLEY.

Pah!—'tis a quare trick o' Swift's to be namin' his poor—

STELLA.

And boots for the Duke o' Dally-gate—

DINGLEY.

Pah!—bekase ould Dally hants the Deanery gate—
Swift's christened him a jooker—

STELLA.

A shawl for old Tearagowns—

DINGLEY.

Ha ha!—the Dean's christened the ould slattern right *that* time.

STELLA.

And shoes for the two little Kelleys—[*A sudden roar of voices from beyond door.*] Hark—

DINGLEY.

'Tis the Dean's beggars. Faith—they're gettin' weary o' waitin' for the Dean's "bounty." Ha ha—

STELLA.

Nay, Dingley, they are the Dean's parishioners—[*going to door 2, opening it and calling.*] Patrick—[*returning at table. Enter PATRICK, aged thirty-five, red-cheeked, tousel-headed, shrewd Irish peasant. PATRICK pretends fear of DINGLEY when she speaks to him, giving a little "lape" on those occasions.*]

DINGLEY.

Aye, aye—young rascal—wastin' time at the kitchen door when ye shud be doin' your chores—

PATRICK.

Yis'm—no, m'm—*[saluting STELLA.]* Yis, Miss?

STELLA.

Patrick, take this basket out.

PATRICK.

[Shouldering basket.] Yis'm.

DINGLEY.

An' place it out o' rach o' them beggars lest they steal it, basket an' all—

PATRICK.

Yes, m'm—*[opening door 1. A babble of moans, cries, etc., comes from beyond. PATRICK closes the door again with a comical look to STELLA.]*

STELLA.

They're too near the door, Patrick—Bid them move far beyond the sacristy—

PATRICK.

[Saluting.] Yis, Miss—*[exit door 1. The babel again heard but fading off later. STELLA stands at the table and begins to count the coins there with doleful looks.]*

DINGLEY.

The brazen beggars—'tis the street they shud be waitin' in. Hantin' the Deanery gates as though Swift had the wealth o' the Indies.

STELLA.

How few shillings—how few! *[Going to bookshelf, taking a small china box from behind books, peering within, shaking her head dolefully, replacing box and returning to coins on table.]* Ah-h—*[again counting coins.]*

DINGLEY.

Hah, child—Ye'd better be handin' over them shillings to me, for the Deanery kitchen nades new crockery—. Aha— 'twas a cracked plate that the Dean ate his breakfast off this mornin'. Him as used to be dinin' in Lunnun wi' jooks an' lords off gold an' silver dishes—ha ha—.

STELLA.

Just—twenty shillings—No more!

DINGLEY.

'Tis just two months sin' those Tories made a Dean out o' Swift—. Aha—oho—'Twas a bishop's gown he'd counted on—would ha' gotten it, too, but for Duchess what's-her-name. What's the name o' Swift's Duchess, child?

STELLA.

Marlbro—Marlbro—. Don't bother me, Dingley, dear.

PATRICK.

[*Re-entering with suppressed merriment.*] Miss?

STELLA.

Patrick?

PATRICK.

Another nady wan, Miss—. A new wan—.

STELLA.

Another? Dear me, Patrick—.

PATRICK.

Tim Casey—as wuz nivir known to wor-r-k a day—.

DINGLEY.

Won't work? He shud be hung instead o' fed—.

PATRICK.

[To STELLA.] An' the father o' six childer—.

DINGLEY.

Six children? He shud be hung an' quartered—.

STELLA.

Bid the poor man wait with the others—.

PATRICK.

Yis, Miss—[*Exit door 1 again.*]

STELLA.

Ah—the poor Dean's list of poor helpless ones grows longer daily—.

DINGLEY.

Aye—an' 'twill bring his proud spirit to the dust when he's no longer able to feed his beggars—that follow him in crowds—. Faugh!

STELLA.

Nay, Dingley, just as those Londons beggars did.

DINGLEY.

Ah—but aren't English beggars a more dacent lot?

STELLA.

Silly Dingley—that can see nothing good on earth lest 'tis English—[*Beginning to dust SWIFT's chair with her handkerchief, tenderly brushing the velvet.*] Heaven grant that Cathedral bazaar nets Swift's poor not less than twenty pounds.

DINGLEY.

The bazaar, forsooth—when the only fat purse there will be that of Charles Ford who'd gi' the moon did ye ask for it—.

STELLA.

[*Laughing.*] Nay, nay—the moon indeed!

DINGLEY.

For 'tis aisily seen that he adores ye—.

STELLA.

Silly old Dingley. Charles is merely my friend.

DINGLEY.

[*Bitterly.*] Let but Swift step aside an' gi' young Ford his chance—.

STELLA.

Be quiet, Dingley dear.

DINGLEY.

[*Bitterly.*] Humph—One'd think 'twas a Prince Royal was to sit in that chair—.

STELLA.

So 'tis. A Prince Royal o' wit, wisdom and all that goes to make a kingly man. As for goodness—'twas yourself told me how he took me from my dead mother's arms. He gave me the shelter of his home—the privilege of his friendship—. So—how can I help but revere him?

DINGLEY.

Yet ye can't make him out more'n a dean—an Irish parson. Faugh!

STELLA.

Ah—'tis a great change. Banished from the English court of which he must have been its finest ornament—. Exiled here to Dublin—to the paltry duties of a deanery—.

DINGLEY.

Him as used to rub elbows wi' English lords—sneer at maids o' honor becace they painted their faces a bit—Aye—aha—him as used to visit the Quane's bed-chamber—Bah—bed-chamber—.

STELLA.

Fie, Dingley! fie! fie! For the Queen's bed-chamber is a reception-room—.

DINGLEY.

Bah—. Isn't a bed-chamber a bed-chamber the wur-rld over? I say it is—an' more shame to Swift to be in't—aven wi' his Queen—.

STELLA.

But—if there were forty others present, Dingley dear?

DINGLEY.

I telle a bed-chamber's a bed-chamber where-e'er it is, an' oft have I remembered it when Swift was thundering forth his sermon from the pulpit o' his Cathedral o' a Sunday—.

STELLA.

[*Going to DINGLEY and placing a hand gently on her shoulder.*] Dingley dear, why so hard on the poor Dean?

DINGLEY.

[*Pushing aside the hand roughly.*] Hard on him, am I? And I mane to be hard on him so long's he so blind to what's so plain to me—your love for him.

STELLA.

[*Recoiling.*] My—love—for Swift? [*Moving off.*]

DINGLEY.

Aye—just that!

STELLA.

But —no—no—no.

DINGLEY.

Haven't I heard ye murmur his name in dreams?

STELLA.

In—dreams? [*Suddenly laying a hand on her own lips.*]

DINGLEY.

Hah—'tis true, then?

STELLA.

[*Recovering.*] In dreams, maybe. But in broad daylight I well know that a simple girl like me can never hope to mate with a genius like Swift. Ha ha—Swift—that never bothers with silly womankind—.

DINGLEY.

Yet Mistress White's letters tell o' Swift's Lunnun charmer—a Mistress Esther Van Homrigh—.

STELLA.

[*Down front, agitatedly, aside.*] Esther Van Homrigh!

DINGLEY.

Who rides in her coach—has flunkies at her mother's door—at whose house Swift kapes his best gown—where Swift's Tory lords can ever find him when wanted—in Mistress Esther's coffee-room—.

STELLA.

Pooh—such gossip worries me not—for why shouldn't the Dean have women friends—.

DINGLEY.

Let 'em be ould an' ugly, then—not beautiful as this Mistress Esther's said to be—. An' 'tis reported—.

STELLA.

[*Passionately.*] Stop—stop—I'll not listen to aught against the Dean—.

DINGLEY.

But if it be the truth, child. Isn't it better to know the truth an' stop eatin' your heart out for one that loves another—.

STELLA.

I tell you I'll not listen—not listen—[*Almost in tears.*]

PATRICK

[*Bursting in at door 1.*] A' say, Miss—.

DINGLEY.

Say yer say, fool, an' be quick about it—.

STELLA.

Patrick?

PATRICK

Coompany comin' Miss, coompany—The ladies Delany—Walsh an' Grannan wi' her two twins—.

STELLA.

[*Brightly.*] Bid them enter, Patrick—[PATRICK *salutes, exits again.*] Promise, Dingley dear, not to sneer at these kindly Irish.

DINGLEY.

Let 'em say naught 'gainst us English, then.

[PATRICK *ushers in at door 1 three quaintly-dressed, middle-aged women, in shawls, poke bonnets, plastered locks and faces shining with friendliness. Two children in pantalettes and Leghorn hats follow shyly in, carrying between them a white cotton, fringed-out basket.* STELLA

hurries forward. There is a babel of greetings, the children adoring STELLA with their eyes. STELLA instantly falls into using the Dublin accent. Exit PATRICK door 1.]

MISTRESSES DELANY, WALSH AND GANNAN.

Top o' the mornin'—top o' the mornin'—give good day to ye, Miss—.

STELLA.

Oh, Mistress Walsh—Mistress Gannan—Mistress Delany—*[shaking hands.]* And the dear children—*[Who drop basket and rush adoringly to her arms.]*

MISTRESSES DELANY, WALSH AND GANNAN.

[Primly, to DINGLEY, with suppressed smiles to each other.] Good day to ye—good day, ma'am—.

DINGLEY.

[Primly, rising.] Same to ye. An' if ye've time to stay I'll sarve ye refreshment—.

STELLA.

[Quickly.] Yes, yes, Dingley. *[Exit DINGLEY stiffly door 3.]*

MISTRESS WALSH.

Ach—the poor crature—.

MISTRESS GANNAN.

Let it not be crame she's to sarve us lest it sour on the way—.

STELLA.

Nay, ladies, but her heart's all right. You're not to mind her. Off wi' your shawls and bonnets—. Hah—those bundles—they're something for the Dean's bazaar—*[MISTRESS DELANY, the primmest of the three guests, places her shawl and bonnet on the settee with the others,*

then bashfully retires to rear with her bundle. The children take off hats and rush to door 1 to bring down the fringed-out cotton basket.]

MISTRESS GANNAN.

[Showing gift, a knitted shawl.] Faith, Mistress Stella, 'tis a wee small gift indade—.

STELLA.

[With enthusiasm.] 'Twill bring shillings to the bazaar and a bit o' comfort to some woman's shoulders—
[Snatching up the dainty muslin cap from MISTRESS WALSH'S bundle as DINGLEY primly re-enters with a plate of cake which she silently passes round. The three women take pieces gingerly, the children refuse. DINGLEY places plate on mantel-shelf and sourly returns to her square. STELLA puts the cap on her head.] 'Tis myself as ud fancy a chance to win this cap—.

MISTRESS WALSH.

[Slyly.] Ye cud wear it as ye sit opposite the Dane at his breakfast table—.

MISTRESS GANNAN.

An' may ye sit at that same table for the rest o' your life—.

STELLA.

Nay—nay—*[Embarrassed, yet laughing.]* Will ye see this fringed-out basket, now—? Ye made it yourselves, children—*[They nod.]* And bought the cotton wi' your own pennies? Ye darlings—*[Embracing both.]*

MISTRESS GANNAN.

I say, Miss—*[Slyly indicating MISTRESS DELANY at rear eating her cake with one hand and clutching her bundle with the other.]* 'Tis something she refused to show us on the way, Miss.

STELLA.

[*Bringing MISTRESS DELANY down.*] Mistress Delany—let us see what ye have there for the bazaar—.

MISTRESS DELANY

[*Standing bashfully at table.*] Nay, 'tis naught at all, at all.

STELLA.

Let us be the judge o' that. [*MISTRESS DELANY hesitatingly discards the paper cover and displays a yard-square silken quilt of many colors, green predominating. There is a chorus from all the others but DINGLEY. "Splendid," "Grand!"*]

STELLA.

'Tis magnificent—faith—St. Patrick's self'd be proud o' it—.

MISTRESS DELANY

Then may good luck go with it for the Dane's bazaar—
[*Giving it to STELLA.*]

STELLA.

'Tis a beautiful gift—.

DINGLEY.

Aye—had it less o' green in it.

MISTRESS DELANY

Less—o'—green—[*Collapsing into SWIFT's chair with closed eyes and stiffened limbs. Her two friends toss cake onto table, rush to her, chafe her hands, fan her with kerchiefs, etc.*]

STELLA.

[*Hurrying to DINGLEY.*] Dingley, Dingley—[*Pointing to the others.*]

DINGLEY.

Pooh—all I said was the truth, wasn't it? [MISTRESS DELANY *revives*.]

STELLA.

[*Joining the others, gayly.*] Listen, ladies. You're to know that Mistress Dingley hates even grass 'cause 'tis green—.

THE THREE WOMEN.

[*Mollified.*] Hates—grass? Oh—Oh—.

DINGLEY.

Chut—pish—bah—.

STELLA.

Let a green butterfly or even a green grasshopper hover near—.

THE THREE WOMEN.

[*With pitying looks at DINGLEY.*] Och—the 'poor creature—to hate a *grane* butterfly.

DINGLEY.

[*Explosively.*] Chut—pish—I'd have ye to know—.

STELLA.

[*To prevent an outbreak. Drawing children to her embrace.*] Ah—ye dear things—.

MISTRESS GANNAN.

Ye shud be havin' some av yer own, Miss—.

STELLA.

Sure I'd love to—.

MISTRESS WALSH.

[*Slyly.*] An' the Dane'd make a splendid father.

STELLA.

Shame on ye, Mistress Walsh.

MISTRESS WALSH.

[*Gravely.*] 'Tis what all Dublin expects.

DINGLEY.

Aye—aye—let Swift say to Stella “marry me”—

STELLA.

[*Rushing to snatch the square from DINGLEY's hands and holding it up.*] See, ladies, the fine square that Mistress Dingley has made for the Dean's bazaar—.

DINGLEY.

[*Snatching it back.*] 'Tis not for the bazaar at all at all—. 'Tis a gift for Mistress White o' Lunnun.

THE THREE WOMEN.

[*With awe.*] O' Lunnun?

DINGLEY.

Aye, Lunnun.

MISTRESS GANNAN.

What news from there, Miss?

STELLA.

The war still goes on. Though the Dean declares 'tis a useless waste o' blood an' treasure. But—who cares for Lunnun news now that the Dean is here in Dublin?

MISTRESS WALSH.

An' may he nivr return to his Tories—.

MISTRESS DELANY

They have nobody *now* to pull thim out o' trouble, and Doctor Delany says—.

DINGLEY.

"Doctor Delany SAYS!!" Wouldn't ye think 'twas an oracle spoke—.

MISTRESS DELANY

Ow—w—[*signs of another collapse.*]

STELLA.

[*To prevent same.*] Come, children, give us a song.

MISTRESS GANNAN.

Stop, Johanna, hangin' on Mistress Stella. Sure, she's a grown-up lady. Faith, Miss, they'll sing naught but the new song—'tis a game as well. 'Tis called "Lunnun Bridge is fallin' down." Sing, Johanna—Begin, Kitty agra—.

THE CHILDREN

[*Clasping hands at centre and singing the lines*]—

"London Bridge is fallin' down—

Fallin' down—fallin' down—

London Bridge is fallin' down—

My—fair—ladye."

[*Standing with raised hands in an arch, all but DINGLEY pass under. The second time STELLA is stopped in the arch, gets a whispered word from a child, on which she goes behind her and clasps her waist. Each of the three women cross under the arch, following STELLA's action; till, finally all stand swaying at center, singing, swinging and keeping time with tapping feet.*]

PATRICK.

[*Rushing in at door 1.*] Whist—whist—[*They ignore him. Upon which PATRICK forgets his manners and rushes into the group.*] WHIST—THE DANE—THE DANE—.

STELLA AND THE THREE WOMEN.

THE DEAN—[*In laughing dismay as all hurry into shawls and hats, STELLA helping the twins. DINGLEY seizes the gifts, thrusts them hastily behind the silken curtain at book-shelf, snatches up the plate of cake and hurries through door 3 with it. Instantly returns to sit demurely on settee at right, pretending to work on her square, but plainly anticipating SWIFT'S "catching" the group.*]

STELLA.

But why hurry away? Sure, the Dean'll not ate ye—.

MISTRESS WALSH.

Ah—but fancy him findin' us Lunnun Bridgin' in his sitting-room—.

MISTRESS GANNAN.

The Dane—that ever hates “silly womankind”—.

STELLA.

No—'tis not so at all—.

MISTRESS DELANY

Aye, Miss, but he does. For 'twas only this mornin' that the Doctor said—.

DINGLEY.

The Doctor SAID! Chut—pish—bah-h-h—.

MISTRESS GANNAN.

[MISTRESS DELANY *collapses again*. MISTRESS GANNAN catches her in time. MISTRESS WALSH helps. *Appealingly.*] Ah, Miss—for a short cut to gate—.

STELLA.

Patrick shall show ye past the sacristy—beyond the Dean's tulip-bed—[PATRICK leads to door 1. The two

women slowly follow, still supporting MISTRESS DELANY. The twins follow. Door closed.] Dingley dear—when you promised me to be nice to them—.

DINGLEY.

But wasn't I "nice?" Did I speak aught but the blessed truth? Besides, I have it in for her wonderful "doctor." Sure, I hate every bone in his body. [Door 1 opens. The twins again rush in. STELLA meets them at centre, takes a gay whirl with them, then kneels at centre, embracing them.]

[SWIFT enters, unnoticed but by DINGLEY. SWIFT, in the forty-fifth year of his age. Tall, commanding, even kingly presence. In black wig, black cloth knee-breeches and jacket, low-cut shoes, silver buckles, black cloak, "shovel" hat and white linen "bands." His look is moody. But, as he hangs cloak and hat on pegs under mantel-shelf and views the scene at centre, his face brightens as he comes down. The children discover him, point at him with affrighted looks, rush past him and out at door 1. SWIFT takes no notice, but comes down to STELLA, who, caught in "silliness," droops her head. SWIFT lifts her face with half-sad, half-bantering smile, lifting her and bringing her down front, his arm about her. STELLA, with a little cry as of embarrassment, drops her head on his breast.]

SWIFT.

[After a moment, his arm still about her, staring moodily ahead.] You—love—those—children, Stella?

STELLA.

[With eager look.] Yes—as I love ALL children—.

SWIFT.

[*After a pause.*] Ah—would that Swift would be wise—be wise—and so—be happy—[*Releasing STELLA and sinking moodily into his chair.*]

STELLA.

[*Behind him, touching his shoulder with sympathy.*] Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Patting the hand.*] My one—true—friend—.

STELLA.

Always! [*Turning ledger to him and pointing to it.*] See—all's ready—the shillings for your poor, waiting beyond the door.

SWIFT.

[*With strong distaste, drawing ledger forward.*] Ah—ye think to hide from me the bitterness o' my lot?

STELLA.

Nay—but to show you the brightness of it.

SWIFT.

And Dingley there—. She's in the kindly plot too?

DINGLEY.

Nay—. If so keen an eye as the Dean's sees not the benefit o' his deanery, may it remain blind till the end.

SWIFT.

[*Without bitterness.*] Aye, Dingley. Caustic's good for a wound. Do not hesitate to lay it on. [*Mutteringly, as he scans page.*] Ah—. This dispensing of "charity." "Whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth," eh? And 'tis

left to "charity" to heal the sore—. God's poor! Aye—and at the devil's mercy, too, for who DARE deny that poverty leads to crime—and crime to perdition? [*Silent, staring. PATRICK enters door 1, two featherless chickens in hand.*]

PATRICK.

Ahem—yer rivirince—.

SWIFT.

What now, sirrah?

PATRICK.

[*Holding up chickens.*] From Archbishop, sor. His futman waits beyant—.

SWIFT.

For my thanks, eh? Throw them over the deanery wall and begone—[*Returning to page. STELLA dismisses PATRICK to door 1 and places chickens on chair at left. Mutteringly with rising fury.*] "Catty, the widow" aged eighty, "one shilling." "Mary Meggs" chasted wi' ears that hear not, "one shilling." "Larry Fergus" paralyzed and ever hungry "one shilling." "Peggy Malone" the widowed mother of six, wi' another under her heart—"one shilling." One shilling—[*striking the table.*] ONE SHILLING—yet I've naught to give her but *one shilling*—[*Rising and walking about with fierce gestures and mutterings.*] God—oh God—! [*With deep sympathetic look at SWIFT, STELLA gathers up the coins, goes to door 1 and out, the distant voices of beggars again heard.*]

DINGLEY.

Humph—she's off now—to gie away the Dean's "pennies." Ah-h—'tis a g-r-e-a-t change fro' dispensin' "favors" to the English nobility—.

SWIFT.

[*Hearing only her voice.*] Be quiet, woman.

DINGLEY.

What'll ye say when she gie's hersel' to Ford—as loves her—. Ford—who's young an' rich—.

SWIFT.

[*As before.*] Silent, can't ye—.

DINGLEY.

[*Hanging her square on chair at left, looks back at SWIFT with sneering look.*] Humph—[*Exits door 3.*]

STELLA.

[*Re-enters, followed by a red-cheeked, husky, ragged beggar who, on seeing SWIFT, mutely refuses to advance, remaining at door 1. STELLA comes down, touches SWIFT's arm gently.*] Dear, another applicant.

SWIFT.

[*Not turning, gruffly.*] Not see him.

STELLA.

But poor and hungry—.

SWIFT.

Have naught for him.

STELLA.

But the father of six children.

SWIFT.

[*Wheeling toward beggar.*] Six children! SIX CHILDREN!! [*Crossing to beggar, seizing his arm and flinging him down front, to before him.*] So, sirrah! Wi' not a ha'pence in your pocket—yet the father o' six

children! Girls who'd be fair an' rosey—boys who'd be strong an' straight *but for want o' bread!* And how DARE ye look me in the face and ask for charity? [*Discarding beggar to rush down front with upflung arms, mutteringly.*] Heaven witness for me if assistance should be given this unconscious criminal!!! Six children and not another shilling in my treasury till next Monday. [*Star-ing about for something to give away. Hurrying to chickens, catching them up, also the cotton square to wrap them in, thrusting both into the beggar's hands and roughly pushing him to door 1.*] There now—be off—be off—and don't come back here till next Monday—[*Beggar, terrified, rushes through door 1.* SWIFT, with a look of relief, returns to his chair. To STELLA, who has moved to save the square, then refrained.] Can thank Archbishop—now—wi' a clear conscience. [*DINGLEY re-enters door 3 as PATRICK enters door 1 with letterbag.*]

PATRICK.

[*Saluting.*] Yer rivirince—[*Holding up bag.*]

SWIFT.

[*Eagerly.*] Come hither, man—[PATRICK obeys. SWIFT eagerly seizes the bag, empties contents out, discards the bag, which PATRICK carries out door 2. Holding up a letter]—For Mistress Rebecca Dingley. [*DINGLEY hurries forward and takes it quickly.* To STELLA]—A newspaper, two useless pamphlets—and no letter for the Dean—. Forgotten—in three short months, *fogotton!*

DINGLEY.

[*Having opened letter. In triumph.*] 'Tis myself as is not forgotten—'Tis a letter from London—[SWIFT takes no notice, sinking into moodiness again. DINGLEY crosses to settee and reads her letter.]

STELLA

Forgotten by your London friends, but see the newer friends you have—. Archbishop—Dr. Delany—Charles Ford .

SWIFT.

[*Dismissing all as dust.*] Pah-pah—.

STELLA

And see the fine deanery they've given you—.

SWIFT.

Four wretched walls—.

STELLA.

Wi' Cathedral at its very doors—.

SWIFT.

Aye—filled with slaves that rise not 'gainst the whip that flays—the taxes that rob them—the rents that rack them to the dust—!

STELLA.

Ah—but now that the great Dean is here to fight—to defend them—.

SWIFT.

Bah, child—. Swift is but a memory now—. A maggot on a dunghill—. Go—leave me to my misery—[*Beginning to read newspaper with little interest.*]

STELLA.

[*Crossing to DINGLEY, who is now reading her letter and shaking her head over it. In lower tone*]—Bad news, Dingley dear?

DINGLEY.

[*Suddenly pressing the letter to her breast.*] Yes an' no.

STELLA.

[*Recoiling.*] Dingley—!

DINGLEY.

Forgive me, child. 'Tis a letter from Mistress White o' Lunnun. As for news [*with a sniff—replacing it in bosom. Missing the square.*] The square—the square—what's become o' the square for Mistress White—?

STELLA.

[*Soothingly, indicating SWIFT as reading.*] S-h-h—.

DINGLEY.

Cud that thavin' beggar—Hah—the chickens—Swift gave him the chickens—[*Fiercely, seizing STELLA's arm.*] Could the Dean—.

STELLA.

But the Dean had naught to wrap them in—.

DINGLEY.

[*Beginning to rock back and forth.*] Oh, oh—a long month's work—a gift for Mistress White—.

STELLA.

There—there. Swift shall pay you for't—.

DINGLEY.

[*Shaking her fist at SWIFT.*] Aye—that he *shall*! Pay *dearly* for't—.

SWIFT.

[*Explosively, to himself.*] Hah—what's this—what's this? Ah—the madmen—the fools—. What—do the Whigs DARE!! Oh—my poor England at the mercy o' her foes at last! [*Sinking back into chair again reading.*]

[*A knock at door 1. DINGLEY opens it. Enter CHARLES FORD, aged 28. Scholarly-looking, richly but simply dressed, brown wig, brown knee-breeches and coat, brown silken stockings, silver buckled shoes. DOCTOR DELANY follows. Aged forty, the chubby type, seeing the bright side of things always. Bubbling over with patriotism and bulls. With rolling r's and broad a's. In the simple black of the Dublin professional man. The reverse in every way of his prim, angular wife. Both men glance at SWIFT, decide not to disturb him yet, salute STELLA, FORD with devotion. DINGLEY closes door and primly waits to be "spoken to."*]

FORD.

Mistress Stella—[*Nodding to DINGLEY, who smiles slightly.*]

STELLA.

[*Giving her hand to each, radiantly.*] Charles—Dr. Delany—?

DELANY.

Fairest flower o' the morning—[*Nodding toward DINGLEY with the corners of his mouth drawn down.*] Wi' the gentlest o' guardians—.

DINGLEY.

[*Coming forward.*] Chut—pish—bah—[*DELANY and DINGLEY cross at the same time thus necessitating a sort of war-dance. DELANY with deprecating smile, DINGLEY with a snort of disdain. Exit DINGLEY door 3.*]

FORD.

[*Joining SWIFT, familiar, yet reverential.*] Morning, Mister Dean—.

SWIFT.

[*Rising and thrusting newspaper into his hand, ignoring DELANY's humble salute.* DELANY smiles, joins STELLA at right.] Read that bit o' news.

FORD.

[*Reading without enthusiasm.*] Yes—for the Tories it's bad news indeed—.

SWIFT.

The worst—the very worst. This useless war continues year after year—Marlbro is still the “worshipped General”—winning useless victories—recklessly spilling precious blood—piling expenses on wretched England that mean enormous profits for his friends—expenses that come back to his own greedy pocket in streams of gold—.

FORD.

Can it be possible that General Marlbro—.

SWIFT.

Knows as well as I do that this war is useless—that all his victories are barren ones, netting his country nothing, except that it adds to his own glory—. God of heaven—where will this useless waste of blood and money lead?

FORD.

But why doesn't the Tory ministry—.

SWIFT.

Because the Tories are at each other's throats—. Bolingbroke quarrelling with Lord Treasurer—. Oh—my country—my distracted country—.

DELANY.

Tut-tut, Mister Dean. So long's 'tis not Erin that suffers, since she's never a farthing with which to bless her—

self—[*Pose of orator.*] Erin—wi' its green fields—its flowery dales—its lovely lakes—.

SWIFT.

Bah! Erin! A God-forsaken land—a bog-hole—a sink o' despair—its hills and dales dotted with the sod huts of its wretched peasantry—.

DELANY.

Aye-aye, Mister Dean—But—your country just the same—.

SWIFT.

True—true—Delany. Worse luck for Jonothan Swift—.

FORD.

[*Putting newspaper on table.*] They miss your hand at the helm, sir.

SWIFT.

Pah-pah—.

DELANY.

And they'll be wantin' our great Dean back again—Ha ha—.

STELLA.

Then they'll wish in vain, for the Dean has had enough of their "promises."

SWIFT.

Nay—Stella, the breaking o' those promises was not Lord Treasurer's fault—.

DELANY.

What, sir—ye can forgive them, *though they cheated ye out of a Bishop's gown!!!*

FORD.

[*Warningly.*] Delany—[*Indicating SWIFT's moody look.*]

SWIFT.

[*To himself.*] A bishop's gown—a bishop's gown—.

DELANY.

[*To cheer SWIFT.*] But away wi' politics this fine morning. So long's there's a bottle in the Deanery cellars—eh, Mister Dean?

SWIFT.

[*Dismissing moodiness and rising.*] Ah, Delany—would that I were as light of heart as thou—.

DELANY.

Faith, sir, 'tis easy. Ye've only to be half English—and wholly Irish—[*Leading the way to door 2 which he opens for SWIFT as for a king.*]

SWIFT.

Ford—? [*Exits door 2 followed by DELANY.*]

FORD.

[*Saluting STELLA.*] Mistress Stella—.

STELLA.

[*Smiling.*] Charles—[*FORD salutes, backs through door 2. The voices of the men begin to be heard in argument.*]

DINGLEY.

[*Enters door 3. Looks round, listens at door 2 a moment, then comes down.*] Listen to 'em—'tis as usual about politics—. Hah—Swift's body may be here in Dublin—but his soul's in England—wi' his Bolingbrokes an' Oxfords—and did his Tory friends send for him—Swift'd cross the channel again—.

STELLA.

Nay, Dingley—you are wrong—.

DINGLEY.

Ye are sure o' that, child?

STELLA.

Yes—sure—sure! For why should the Dean return—

DINGLEY.

Why shud he—WHY? [*Taking letter from pocket and holding it up.*] For the best o' reasons—Mistress White tells me that Swift's Lunnun charmer is pinin' for him—[*Reading from letter.*] "'Tis reported that Mistress Esther Van Homrigh is no longer present when her mamma dispenses coffee to her Tory guests—" And here again, "'Tis well-known that a certain lovely young Miss is pinin' for a sight o' the great—the world-famous Dean—."

STELLA.

[*Who listens with repressed agitation.*] Stop—Dingley—stop—

DINGLEY.

[*Reading.*] "And 'tis reported that the young lady may yet cross the channel to visit the Dean at the Irish capitol—"

STELLA.

[*Tearfully.*] I tell you I'll not listen—

DINGLEY.

[*Placing letter on table with look of pity.*] Then, child, read for yourself—[*Backing to door 3. Exits.*]

STELLA.

No—no—I'll not read it—I—I dare not—[*Taking up letter.*] Yet—if it be the truth—[*Reads letter.*] DINGLEY softly enters, waiting at door 3. With a cry of grief, covering her eyes.]

DINGLEY.

[*Running to her, with deep pity.*] My poor Stella—my darling Stella—[*Opening her arms.*]

STELLA

Go away, Dingley—go—leave me—.

DINGLEY.

But—if I want to help you bear your sorrow—[*FORD enters from door 2. DINGLEY snatches letter, quickly exits door 3. STELLA mops her eyes hastily.*]

FORD.

[*Coming down quickly.*] Mistress Stella—this London news—it may enkindle Swift's desire to help his Tory friends—to rush to their aid—to cross the channel again—We—his friends must prevent—Ah—you also fear that—.

STELLA.

Nay—Swift will *not* return—'Tis something else that grieves me—.

FORD.

But—good God—there are tears in your eyes—[*Taking her hand.*] Tell me—I implore you—. Mistress Stella—I live only to serve you—.

STELLA.

'Tis that a woman awaits Swift's return to London—.

FORD.

A woman? Hah, if that be all—. Ah—there's but one woman on earth for Jonothan Swift and—[*kissing her hand*] that woman is yourself!

SWIFT.

[*Hurrying through door 2 followed by DELANY.*] I tell you, Delany, 'twould be a coward's part to desert his friends in time of need—and if ever England needed a word of advice—'tis now! [*Throwing himself into his chair, drawing forward pen and paper and beginning to write rapidly.*]

DELANY.

Aye—Mister Dane—a word of advice only. Provided ye won't think o' crossing the channel to aid 'em—.

SWIFT.

Never—Delany—never—I shall never return. But my pen is at their service always—[DELANY, FORD and STELLA group off to right, talking softly and watching SWIFT. Finally sanding the sheet.] There—a word to those quarrelling Tories—a word that, if taken, will surely outwit Marlbro and his profiteering friends and hasten the end of this iniquitous war—. Come hither, Delany—there's no time to waste—.

DELANY.

[*Joining him, unwillingly, his hands behind him.*] But, Mister Dean—.

SWIFT.

[*Impatiently, flicking the page across the table.*] To the printers—to the printers—have 'em strike off a thousand sheets—say that the Dean demands instant service—.

DELANY.

But—sir—.

SWIFT.

Say that all's to cross the channel at the next sailing—. Hurry—man—hurry—a thousand lives may depend on

this page's printing. Even the Queen—those cursed Whigs—those fools of Tories—all will read it.

DELANY.

But—if it benefit not poor Erin—.

SWIFT.

[*Impatiently.*] Erin—and ever Erin! Man—man—get thyself a wider charity—.

[*Door 1 opens.* ERASMUS LEWIS, *dapper, keen-eyed, suave court politician, in red wig, travelling dress, deprecating smile, enters after a loud knock.* SWIFT, *frowning at interruption, turns.* *His face beams, he hurries to LEWIS, seizes his hands and draws him down.*] Lewis—LEWIS—ah—'tis good to see an English face again—by what good fortune—.

LEWIS.

Ah—Swift—King of Tories—.

SWIFT.

[*With repressed emotion.*] When did you arrive?

LEWIS.

But an hour since—. My ship's at anchor in the bay—.

SWIFT.

Where it shall remain for yet awhile, eh?

LEWIS.

Ha ha—well, Swift, that depends on yourself—.

SWIFT.

On me? Then 'tis settled. [*Bringing LEWIS down.*] Lewis, this is my ward—Mistress Stella Johnson—[LEWIS *bows.*] Stella, you see before you Erasmus Lewis, the wildest of politicians—.

LEWIS.

Ha ha, Swift—.

SWIFT.

And the faithfulest of friends—.

STELLA.

Any friend of the Dean's is welcome to his deanery—.

LEWIS.

[*Kissing her hand, with a sly look at FORD.*] Thanks. Mistress Johnson's charms hath oft been told me by— Ah, Ford—.

FORD.

[*Smiling and giving his hand.*] Ah, Lewis—so far from home and from those wires you so love to pull—.

LEWIS.

Ah—but in the service of my friends only. Eh, Swift?

SWIFT.

Always. Lewis, this is Doctor Delany—Patriot—philosopher—yes—and orator—.

DELANY.

[*Abashed.*] Aha—forbear, sir Dean—forebear—.

SWIFT.

Doctor, this is Erasmus Lewis, Under-Secretary of State in the Tory Ministry—.

DELANY.

[*Of the Tory ministry?*] [*Withdrawing his extended hand.*]

LEWIS.

Doctor, the pleasure's mine—Patriot—philosopher and orator—.

DELANY.

[*Meaningly.*] Faith, Mister Secretary for the Tory ministry—'tis a f-a-r cry from London to little Dublin—.

LEWIS.

Pooh, Doctor—what's a long journey—in a good cause?

DELANY.

[*His fears confirmed.*] Good God—[SWIFT takes LEWIS' cloak and hat to mantel-shelf. STELLA and FORD join DELANY off to right, watching SWIFT and LEWIS with worried looks.]

SWIFT.

Lewis, I'd begun to think that my London friends had all deserted me—Not a letter—not a single line—In three short months I've been forgotten—.

LEWIS.

Forgotten? Why, Swift, there are those that think of you daily—hourly—Bolingbroke—Oxford—.

SWIFT.

Aye—'tis reported they're at each other's throats—.

LEWIS.

God's pity, too—. When so much hangs on a pull altogether—. Forgotten you? When a thousand Tories mourn your absence—when even Her Majesty, the Queen—.

SWIFT.

Pooh, the Queen—!

LEWIS.

Also her Grace of Marlbro—who's made up her quarrel with the Court—.

SWIFT.

Aye—to strengthen her “General’s” hands in the continuing of this useless war—.

LEWIS.

Exactly. And unless all signs fail—.

DELANY.

Looke, Lewis, can a Queen be dominated by a mere Duchess?

LEWIS.

Ah, Doctor—you don’t know her Grace—. She’s the rock in the Tory road to success—the nightmare that rides each Tory’s dreams—. Eh, Swift?

SWIFT.

[*Dismissing signs of interest.*] Bah, Lewis—what care I for such news? Since I’m forever out o’ politics—?

LEWIS.

Out of politics? Heavens—Swift—I’ll not believe—. No—that cannot be—[*With dismay.*]

SWIFT.

Ha ha—you’ll soon get used to the thought—[*Abruptly turning away and joining those at right.*]

LEWIS.

[*Biting his nails and sinking into SWIFT’s chair. After a moment.*] One moment, Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Over his shoulder.*] Well, Lewis?

LEWIS.

You’ve surely guessed why I’ve crossed the channel—why I am here in Dublin?

SWIFT.

Guessed? Pooh—why should I?

LEWIS.

Er—. I had hoped—I had hoped—to have laid a certain matter of business before you—er—in *private*.

SWIFT.

But—ha ha—since I've no secrets from these—*my friends*—.

LEWIS.

I accept the challenge. Well then, my business is—England's ministry has sent me hither to demand—to implore that Jonothan Swift return to his place at the helm of state—.

SWIFT.

[*With savage joy.*] So! The storm's overtaken them and they want "the Irish parson" to pull them out again? Nay, Lewis, nay. Here I remain wi' those that love me! [*His arm about STELLA's shoulder. FORD takes DELANY to left.*]

DELANY.

[*Pose of orator.*] Ah, Mister Secretary—I'd have ye know that the Dean hath a nobler work at home— His wretched country—groanin' under laws that have made slaves o' half of us—exiled the other half and ruined those that's left—[*Applause from all. He would resume but—.*]

LEWIS.

[*Rising, animated.*] Bravo—doctor—encora—encora—. Sentiments sublime—but—they don't affect the tide—it turns in an hour and my ship must be away—[*Getting hat and cloak, then offering his hand to SWIFT.*] So it must be goodbye.

SWIFT.

Goodbye? Nay, Lewis. So long a voyage—so brief a visit—.

LEWIS.

[*Meaningly, yet gayly.*] The fault's not mine, sir.

SWIFT.

You can at least break bread with us—[*Taking away hat and cloak and giving them to FORD who again hangs them on pegs under shelf.*]

LEWIS.

[*Pretending reluctance.*] But—affairs of state—.

SWIFT.

Pooh—Let 'em wait. The deanery cellars be not all empty—.

LEWIS.

Well—what's an hour more or less? I agree.

SWIFT.

Ah! Then Mistress Stella—[*Joining STELLA and taking her to right, where, near the flower-stand he whispers, at the same time plucking a blossom and giving it to her.*]

LEWIS.

[*To DELANY and FORD. Bitterly.*] And to think that a mere petticoat stands between England and salvation!

FORD.

But—since “the petticoat” and Swift's happiness—.

LEWIS.

Pshaw! Swift's earthly flight—like the eagle's—should be to soar alone. His destiny should be the world's arena—where his genius belongs!

DELANY.

But, Mister Secretary—what about Swift's genius to help poor Erin?

LEWIS.

What! You'd smother him in an Irish bog when England's salvation hangs upon him! [*His eye suddenly falling on the written page before him.*]

DELANY.

Hah—the bishop's gown ye cheated him out of? Nay—
nay—the Dean's not to be cheated twice—[*Exit STELLA*
door 3. SWIFT comes to centre.]

LEWIS.

[*Staring at page.*] Hah—what's this—what's this?

SWIFT.

Written by me an hour since—?

LEWIS.

But—it's addressed *to all England*—.

SWIFT.

[*Grimly.*] Including my foolish friends, the Tories—.

FORD.

[*Saluting.*] Swift—[*who returns it.*] Lewis—[*who*
returns it, still intently reading page. FORD moves to door
1.]

DELANY.

[*Saluting.*] Swift—[*who now intently watches LEWIS*
and ignores DELANY, who smiles, shrugs.] Mister Sec-
retary—better luck next time—.

LEWIS.

Doctor—[*Exit FORD and DELANY. Throwing down*
the page with a shrug.] Good enough argument, Swift,
but—humph—.

SWIFT.

[*Seizing the page and reading it.*] What's wrong here,
Lewis? I've covered the ground—pointed out the best
means of—.

LEWIS.

Yes—yes—But—.

SWIFT.

Then where's the weak point?

LEWIS.

Where? WHERE? 'Tis because 'tis written on Irish soil—. But let Swift thunder it from the floor of the *English Parliament*—.

SWIFT.

[*After a moment, discarding the page. With finality.*] No, Lewis—no. Eternally no!

LEWIS.

Swift—a last appeal—. With the ministry at each other's throats—with our treasury empty—.

SWIFT.

[*With fierce joy.*] Aha—I foresaw it—!

LEWIS.

With the Queen distracted—.

SWIFT.

Bah—. She's always hated me—!

LEWIS.

Swift—for England's sake—for God's sake return with me—.

SWIFT.

Return with you? For what reward? *An Irish deanery?*

LEWIS.

Ah—but *then* 'twas the best in the Tory gift—.

SWIFT.

[*With rising fury.*] A deanery in wretched Dublin—where the very air reeks of misery—where man is a chattel—ruled wi' a whip—refused the right to happiness—aye—even to choose his own way to salvation—. No—no—I'll not return.

LEWIS.

So—. This is the message that I'm to carry back to your friends?

SWIFT.

Friends, eh? Men who'll use you—. Then—when they've no further use for you—fling you out an Irish deanery as they'd toss a stick into the sea for a dog—"Hi—swim for it and be damned to ye"—[*Falling exhausted into chair.*]

LEWIS.

But, sir, 'tis the privilege of the great to forget—to forgive—.

SWIFT.

No—no—. I can't forget—I can't forgive—[*Single boom of cannon.*] Hah—what's that?

LEWIS.

The signal from my ship—[*Getting cloak and hat from pegs.*] The tide has turned—. I must begone—[*Offering hand to SWIFT.*]

SWIFT.

[*Rising, agitatedly, taking the hand.*] So soon, Lewis? Without breaking bread wi' me?

LEWIS.

[*Brokenly.*] Bread that would choke me—since my mission's failed—Ah, sir—to leave you here—exiled—in

what you believe is a land of slaves—your genius blighted—. Ah, sir—[*Rushing to door 1 and out. Door closed.*]

SWIFT.

[*Staring after him, falling into chair.*] “Exiled in a land of slaves.” God—oh God—[*Covering his face.* LEWIS softly opens door, peers in with satisfied look, as softly closes door. After a moment a loud knock. SWIFT instantly recovers.]

LEWIS.

[*Enters with smile and letter in hand.*] Gad, sir, had near forgotten Lord Treasurer’s letter—[SWIFT snatches it imperiously, tears it open and reads eagerly. LEWIS watches with hope. SWIFT breathes deeply, the letter finished, ponders.] May I be permitted? [SWIFT gives letter to LEWIS who reads with pretended amaze.] Why, sir, ’tis the promise of Canterbury—A promise over Lord Treasurer’s own signature. *Canterbury!!* Heavens, Swift, you can’t refuse NOW! What! Bury yourself in Dublin when—for the reaching for it you can become *Archbishop of Canterbury*—.

SWIFT.

Bah—. Why waste time and words? I’ll none of it—None of it!

LEWIS.

Ah then—[*With covered eyes, turning to door.*]

SWIFT.

Wait—Lewis—wait. [*Going to him, his hand on his shoulder.*] Tell me, isn’t just my wounded pride that refuses?

LEWIS.

I only know, sir, that my country needs you—that the Tory party is about to fall—perhaps never to rise again—God, Swift—I can already hear those damnable Whigs even now shouting “victory”—Swift—Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Surrendering without enthusiasm.*] Yes—yes—’Tis my duty to return—’Tis my duty—[*Hurries to table, takes letters from drawer, divides, thrusting one pile back into drawer.*]

LEWIS.

Now God be thanked indeed—[*Door 2 opens.* LEWIS, showing fear of interruption, turns quickly. PATRICK enters, carrying a small tray, on which are two small glasses and flask of wine. LEWIS gaily takes it from PATRICK, puts tray on table, thrusts the pile of letters into PATRICK’S hands and gently pushes him to left. SWIFT now in a day-dream with frowning brow.] To the quay, man, to the quay—Ask for the good ship “Orient.” Hurry—hurry—[*Exit PATRICK with stolid look. Coming to table, filling both glasses, still fearing interruption. Pushing glass to SWIFT, who still dreams. Raising his own glass.*] To Tory success—to victory—to Swift—to the gown of Canterbury—.

SWIFT.

[*His hand finding the glass but not raising it. Dreamily.*] Canterbury—.

LEWIS.

To Jonothan Swift—to History, that shall acclaim Jonothan Swift as England’s greatest Primate!

SWIFT.

[*As before.*] Canterbury—[*moving to right.*]

LEWIS.

[*Gayly, intercepting.*] Where away, sir?

SWIFT.

[*As before.*] Why—to prepare to depart—.

LEWIS.

Why, sir—your cabin's prepared—that is—Lord Treasurer hoping—you understand—[*Leading him to left as second boom of cannon is heard.*] Hark, sir—we must be off—the tide is at flood, sir—[*Snatching SWIFT's cloak and hat from pegs as he sees STELLA enter, followed by DINGLEY bearing a larger tray covered by a white napkin from door 3.*]

SWIFT.

[*Turning and crossing with same dreamy look to STELLA as DINGLEY puts tray on table. Taking STELLA's hand.*] Farewell, child—. I leave ye safe in Dingley's care—.

STELLA.

[*Clinging to his hand.*] You—you are leaving Dublin—leaving me?

SWIFT.

[*As before.*] Yes—yes—'tis duty calls—duty and Canterbury—[*Another boom of cannon. SWIFT turns to LEWIS.*]

LEWIS.

Come, Swift—we must be off—[*Giving hat as to a conquerer and throwing the cloak over SWIFT's shoulder. SWIFT mechanically exits door 1 without a backward look. LEWIS salutes the two women with a radiant smile, exits, door 1 closed.*]

STELLA.

[*With a bitter cry.*] Swift—SWIFT—[*Falls face down, into chair at table. DINGLEY stares with clenched hands at door 1 then draws STELLA's head to her bosom with a look of pity.*]

End of the First Act.

THE SECOND ACT

DRAWING-ROOM OF THE VAN HOMRIGH HOME, LONDON.

A morning in July, three months later.

A richly furnished room, garish in style, but attractive. The entrance door 1 is at left, a corridor leading off from it. To right of this door is a wide, open window giving a glimpse of street. To right of window is door 2 opening outward into what is supposed to be the coffee-room. Door 3 is down to the extreme right and also opens outward. All doors and the window are draped with silken hangings. At left is a round table. On it is a quaint box holding a pack of cards, a blue satin bon-bon box and a vase of flowers. At right-centre is an escritoire holding pens, ink, paper and a small red-covered book. Chairs set about. Flowers placed lavishly here and there.

AT RISE. MRS. VAN HOMRIGH, aged forty, sits at the table, a small mirror in hand, with which she is intently surveying the set of her "turban." Extravagantly dressed, curled brown wig, paint, powder and beauty-spots. Good-natured, superficial and ambitious only for her children.

MOLLY VAN HOMRICH, *aged twenty, a charming duplicate of her mother in extravagant dress, vivacious and saucy, sits at the harpischord strumming away noisily.*

RICHARD HAYS, *aged twenty-three, a handsome youth in the uniform of an English dragoon, paces along at right. Richard is quick-tempered yet manly. He bites his nails, tears a flower to pieces and tosses it away, keeping watch on door 3.*

JEEMS, *the privileged servant in livery, aged forty, stands at door 1, a small silver tray in hand on which are several slips of white paper.*

MOLLY.

[With a final crash of keys. Jumping up, coming to table.] Pah—'tis wearisome to play to a dull audience—.

MRS. VAN HOMRICH.

Thank heaven, Molly child, you've quit makin' a noise as'd wake the seven sleepers—.

MOLLY.

Mama dear, 'tis yourself has a poor ear for music. Where be the cards? I'll tell me own fortune—*[taking cards from box, sitting at table opposite her mother and beginning to shuffle them.]*

MRS. VAN HOMRICH.

[Displaying turban.] Is't on straight, Molly child?

MOLLY.

Straight wi' the part o' your hair, mother. Ah—ye silly old woman—'tis an eye for a second father for us you've gotten—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

For shame, Molly—an' your dada only five years gone—
'Tis not respectful to me ye are—.

MOLLY.

Why shud I be when ye look like a younger sister?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Laughing.*] Shame on ye, Molly—[*admiring herself in mirror.*]

MOLLY.

[*Spreading out cards.*] Come hither, cousin Richard
and list to me readin' me fortune—.

RICHARD.

Pah—pah—let me be, Molly—[*listening at door 3.*]

MOLLY.

Oho—aha, cousin Richard—.

RICHARD.

Let be, I tell you—.

MOLLY.

But hanging round yonder door won't bring Esther in
any the quicker—.

RICHARD.

I tell you I'm not waiting for Esther—I'm *not*.

MOLLY.

Then why are ye marchin' about? To wear out mama's
carpet?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Be quiet, Molly. Let the boy alone.

JEEMS.

Ahem—AHEM—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Who is it, Molly child?

MOLLY.

'Tis only Jeems, mother.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Come hither, Jeems—*[laying down mirror. JEEMS comes to table, puts tray on same, salutes, backs to left, exits door 1. Scanning slips with dismay.]* Bills—bills—ach one of 'em manin' a fortune gone from the spout o' a coffee-pot—My—oh my—.

MOLLY.

[Holding up cards.] Look, Richard, a dark man has me in mind—middle-aged, wi' a crown on his head—see—the king o' spades—.

RICHARD.

Stuff—pah—.

MOLLY.

Ah-h—Would it were a jack of hearts instead. Patience, cousin Richard, she'll soon appear—.

RICHARD.

[Angrily, leaving door for window.] Damnation—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[Dismally.] Faith, we've used a power o' coffee lately—. Look, Molly, at these bills to pay—.

MOLLY.

'Tis proud ye shud be that such great men come here to drink your coffee—. Lord Treasurer Oxford, Bolingbroke, little Lewis and the g-r-e-a-t genius o' the world, Dean Jonothan Swift.— Eh, Richard?

RICHARD.

Swift? Pah—pah, I say—!

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

A fortune gone—a fortune for just brown beans!

MOLLY.

[*Jumping up, runs round table, snatches tray.*] Away wi' your bills—[*Runs with same to escritoire, leaves them there, returns to table, sits, pushes over cards.*] Cut the cards, mother, an' see if either o' your girls'll win a husband—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Tearfully, shuffling cards.*] Ye'll both be spinsters on my hands since neither o' ye'll take what's offered ye.

MOLLY.

O-oh—mama—'deed—'deed I'd marry a scarecrow had he a bag o' guineas and—a fine fat cough—As for my sister—.

RICHARD.

An' this be a tellin' o' Esther's secrets I'll *not* listen—[*But listening intently.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

If Esther's wise she'll reach for the coronet that's waitin' for her when that ould harridan passes out. For 'tis plain that her nephew adores your sister—.

MOLLY.

Ye mean young Lovelace?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Aye—nephew to a duchess—.

MOLLY.

Lovelace, whom Swift calls a silly young ass—and worse—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Sharply.*] Let the Dean not concern himself about Hesses heart-affairs. Let him concern himself with his Tories an' his Whigs—. Where's Esther this mornin'?

MOLLY.

Studyin' French in her chamber—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

French! 'Twas Latin the day before—. 'Twill be Greek tomorrow. Ah—would that Swift'd stop urging Essie to books. 'Tis *no* employment for a woman o' fashion—.

MOLLY.

But since Esther hates the powder an' despises the beauty-spots that you and I swear by—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Aye—that's true. What's gotten into the girl lately?

MOLLY.

What all London's aware of—that Esther is in love. Eh, Richard?

RICHARD.

Pooh—pooh—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

In love? And wi' who, Molly?

MOLLY.

Wi' the g-r-e-a-t genius of the world—Dean Jonothan Swift—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

In love wi' Swift!!! A mere parson—. When she can choose from half a dozen o' his betters? My—oh my—[*weepingly.*]

MOLLY.

[*Running to embrace her.*] There, mother, there! Weep not—'tis a love as one-sided as the handle o' a pitcher, for Swift dreams not o' Hesses passion for him—.

RICHARD.

Then why does he write poems to her in his newspaper? Where is the thing? [*Fumbling over things at escreteire.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Poems—to my daughter Esther? Ah-h 'twill set all Lunnun talking!

RICHARD.

Aye, aunt, they're talking now. [*Finding a slip of paper in red-covered book.*] Esther's cut the thing from the printed page and hidden it here in this book. Listen—.

MOLLY.

[*Snatching poem from RICHARD and reading it expressively, with sly glances at RICHARD.*]

Would from her height of youth and beauty
Stoop low to weary pilgrim's hand
My lady fair? For wifely duty
Leave all this world can give,
At my command?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

"For wifely duty!" Good God—'tis a declaration of love!! [*Weeping into her handkerchief.*]

MOLLY.

[*Replacing slip into book, putting book on escreteire. Gayly.*] Nay, mother—'tis just—poetry!

RICHARD.

[*Savagely.*] Poetry? Bah—'tis trash!

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Ah—would that the Dean had remained in Dublin!

MOLLY.

What, mother! Would you have lost to England the Dean's wonderful services? Swift—that has made the Queen end the war—that has already compelled her to recall her "great general" an' put a stop to his robbing England's treasury?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Aye—that I would, since Esther—.

MOLLY.

Sh-h-h—

[Enter ESTHER VAN HOMRIGH at door 3. She is lovely, richly but simply dressed, wearing neither powder, paint nor beauty-spots. At the age of twenty-two, her carriage and self-possession is in striking contrast to that of the two other women. RICHARD devotedly places a chair and footrest. With a mere nod of thanks ESTHER sinks into chair, her hand reaching for the red-covered book, which she opens and reads. RICHARD signals this to MOLLY, who shrugs.]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Well, Esther, is't Greek or Latin this mornin'?

ESTHER.

[Not looking from page.] 'Tis neither, mother. 'Tis a recipe for making puddings without plums—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[Eagerly.] Puddin's wi'out plums—[Coming down.] Show me the line, child?

ESTHER.

[*Pressing the page to her bosom quickly.*] No—no—I cannot—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

'Tis not there? Then let me telle that recipes for puddin's be better readin' than studyin' Greek wi' a gown o' forty-four—! Faith, I'll give Swift a bit o' my mind when he calls this mornin'—[ESTHER resumes reading.]

MOLLY.

When ye know, mother, that you'll be like the rest of us—listenin' and adorin' his wonderful genius—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

'Deed an' I'll tell him he's no business to waste Hesses time wi' Greek an' Latin when she might be at the play an' the dance—.

ESTHER.

The play—! The dance! I leave such silly pleasures for fools!

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Crossing to ESTHER threateningly.*] This—to my face? When your sister an' myself—.

MOLLY.

[*Snatching up tray with bills and running to her mother.*] Come away, mama—Let's leave Hess to her puddin's without plums—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Going with Molly to right.*] Aye—an' to her poem—ha ha—[*Exit both to door 3.*]

RICHARD.

[*Hovering behind ESTHER, summoning courage to advance. Finally going to behind her chair.*] Ahem—
[*ESTHER takes no notice.*] Ahem—I say, Cousin Esther—.

ESTHER.

[*Reading.*] Are you still there, Richard?

RICHARD.

Am I not always near when you condescend to appear? Ah, would that I too were a page o' print—.

ESTHER.

[*Reading, but reaching a hand.*] No—no—Cousin—. When I like you as you are.

RICHARD.

Ah—if you'd only prove that!—[*Kissing her hand ardently.*] Esther—[*dropping on one knee.*] I offer you a life's devotion—.

ESTHER.

[*Impatiently. Withdrawing her hand.*] Richard! After all your promises—.

RICHARD.

But what's a "promise" when every fibre o' my being's calling for you? Esther—Esther—.

ESTHER.

Silly boy! Why not learn dignity—.

RICHARD.

[*Jumping up.*] "Dignity!" I leave that for your parson—'tis his stock in trade!

ESTHER.

[*Rising with scorn.*] Thou jealous creature—! To insult the Dean *behind his back*—!

RICHARD.

Bah—I'll say it to his face if ye dare me to!

ESTHER.

[*Pointing to door 1.*] Go, sir—go—!

RICHARD.

[*In boyish fury flinging himself to left.*] Hah—so ye can waste time on Swift's poem!!! [*Running out at door 1.*]

ESTHER.

Swift's poem—and to me! Ah—[*Reading poem with sweet emotion.*]

Would from her height of youth and beauty
Stoop low to weary pilgrim's hand
My lady fair? For wifely duty
Leave all this world can give,
At my command?

“For wifely duty.” “Leave all this world can give—”
Ah—I could—I would—. Ah—he loves me—he loves me—[*Pressing poem to lips as JEEMS enters door 1.*]

JEEMS.

Ahem—Mistress Esther—.

ESTHER.

[*Hiding the poem in bosom.*] Yes, Jeems? [*Throwing book on escritoire.*]

JEEMS.

A coach and four at the door—My Lord Lovelace and—.

ESTHER.

[*Running to right.*] Lovelace! No—no—Jeems—I'll not see him—[*exits door 3. JEEMS returns to door 1.*]

[Enter the DUCHESS OF MARLBRO, almost walking over JEEMS who backs, bowing to centre. The DUCHESS, aged forty-five, is extravagantly dressed, powdered and painted. Insolent manner, cackling laugh. LORD LOVELACE follows with eager look about him. Powdered wig, short sword, laces, satins, an egotistical fop, aged twenty-eight. The DUCHESS backs JEEMS to centre while LOVELACE perches himself on table as if at home and begins to eat the bonbons from the box there. A tall Indian servant of the DUCHESS remains stolidly at door 1. Indian dress, white turban, brilliant-colored silken sash, a dagger thrust through same. Being mute, he takes his mistress' orders by signs and replies with the same.]

DUCHESS.

Well, my man—'tis bad manners to stare at your betters—.

LOVELACE.

[Laughing.] Lor, Aunt—.

DUCHESS.

Where are those ye serve? Bid 'em be aware that her Grace o' Marlbro is here—[JEEMS bows, backing out at door 3. DUCHESS begins to feel the draperies.]

LOVELACE.

Aunt—I'll thank ye to be gentler wi' the servants o' this house—.

DUCHESS.

Pooh! Why shud I be?

LOVELACE.

Because the mistress here has always made me welcome—.

DUCHESS.

Heir to a dukedom? The creature's wise.

LOVELACE.

And because I adore her lovely daughter. So that even a servant—.

DUCHESS.

Pooh! I'd ha' honored the man had I tweaked his nose. 'Fore God—these draperies be of finest silk an' there be flowers eno' here to supply me wi' bouquets for a for'night! These commoners be rich—.

LOVELACE.

Yes. Old Van Homrigh had a coffee plantation in Sumatra or was it Java? Then, when he flickered out, his widow brought her two fair daughters to settle here in London. Mistress Esther's the best-educated girl in England. Speaks Latin an' Greek an' French. Think what a help she'll be to me at the Embassy?

DUCHESS.

Humph! An' where did the young jade learn all that?

LOVELACE.

[*Evasively.*] Er—from books, of course.

DUCHESS.

[*Startled, coming down quickly.*] Looke, nephew, if this girl's the wondrous pupil o' the Dean—.

LOVELACE.

Well—an' if she is?

DUCHESS.

[*Looking about her.*] Hah—this must be the very room where Swift penned his damnable pamphlets that spoiled Marlbro's plans an' cut off the stream o' gold just ready

to reach his hands—that made the Queen stop the war an’ call back her army. ’Fore God—it must ha’ been here that Swift an’ his Tories plotted to lose me the Gold Key—access to her Majesty’s bed-chamber—[*Turning quickly.*] No—no—I’ll none o’ your love affairs—I wash my hands o’ them—.

LOVELACE.

Go then—an’ be damned to ye!

DUCHESS.

[*Looking back.*] Then ye mean to marry the girl?

LOVELACE.

If I can get her in no other way—yes.

DUCHESS.

[*Coming down, in tearful fury.*] Then I’ll cut ye off wi’ a shillin’—

LOVELACE.

Pooh! Since you’ve just paid all my debts—.

DUCHESS.

Aye—jeweled garters for married jade—necklaces for court hussies—Ah-ah—.

LOVELACE.

[*Going to her. Soothingly.*] Help me to France with this girl an’ you’re rid o’ me for six months—.

DUCHESS.

But—she’s a friend o’ the Dean—I dare not—.

LOVELACE.

Pooh! A mere parson!

DUCHESS.

Hah—ye've never seen Swift in a fury—. Ah—Jove an' his thunderbolt's naught to him—*[Going again.]*
No—no—I dare not—.

LOVELACE.

[Seizing her hand and indicating those at right.] Aunt!
[MOLLY enters, half-supporting her mother who, already overwhelmed by the DUCHESS' visit is beginning to curtesy.]

MOLLY.

Lud, mama—she's only a woman—just as you and I—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

But—child—a Duchess!!! *[Both coming forward.]*

LOVELACE.

[Bringing the DUCHESS down.] Ladies—the dearest o' aunts—her Grace o' Marlbro—Aunt—the ladies Van Homrigh—.

MOLLY.

[Saluting gayly.] Your Grace—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[Overwhelmed again. Saluting.] Your Grace honors this house—.

DUCHESS.

[Ignoring her and appraising MOLLY.] So, nephew—. This be your flame—.

MOLLY.

Ha ha—no—your Grace—.

LOVELACE.

[Saluting MOLLY.] If 'twere not for her sister—
[MOLLY drops a saucy curtesy.]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Your Grace means my daughter, Esther—.

DUCHESS.

[*Insolently.*] My good woman, speak when spoken to.
[*MOLLY seizes her mother's hand and turns as if to lead her out.*]

LOVELACE.

[*Preventing.*] Ladies, pardon my aunt's bad temper. But she's just lost some thousand o' pounds—.

DUCHESS.

Aye—payin' the debts o' a rascally nephew—.

LOVELACE.

[*Quickly, saluting* MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.] Her Grace is here this morning to ask for your daughter Esther's hand as my wife.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

My daughter's hand in marriage—[*overwhelmed again.*]

LOVELACE.

Yes—Yes—for I love—adore her—[*ESTHER enters door 3. LOVELACE salutes her, standing with his hand on his heart.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Oh, your lordship—'tis a great honor—[*Seeing ESTHER and hurrying to her.*] Child—child—here's the best offer o' all—Thy fortune's made—your chance for a crownet—[*bringing ESTHER down.*]

LOVELACE.

Mistress Esther—!

ESTHER.

[*Coldly.*] Your lordship—!

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

This, your Grace, is my daughter Esther—who speaks the Latin, the Greek an' the French—.

DUCHESS.

[*Walking over* MRS. VAN HOMRIGH *to appraise* ESTHER.] So—Lovelace, this is the wondrous creature—.

LOVELACE.

The fairest girl in England, Aunt, nay, in all the universe—.

DUCHESS.

Good enough form, fair enough face—.

ESTHER.

[*Resenting the appraisal. Haughtily.*] Your Grace—.

DUCHESS.

And as haughty a mien as the parson's own. No powder nor beauty-spots? The parson forbids 'em, eh?

ESTHER.

If your Grace refers to Dean Jonothan Swift—!

DUCHESS.

Aye—none other—him as'd be bishop o' Canterbury—ha ha—but for a certain Duchess—[ESTHER *moves away with haughty look. Aside to* LOVELACE.] Lookee, nephew, it pleases me, after all, to help you humble yonder haughty minx—.

LOVELACE.

Thanks, aunt—.

DUCHESS.

[*To* MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.] Listen, my good woman. My nephew there is to cross to France tomorrow. But wishes not to go alone. So, if your daughter will accept his offer—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Aye, she shall, an' wi' thanks to your Grace—[DUCHESS insolently turns again to appraise hangings. MRS. VAN HOMRIGH joins MOLLY at harpischord.]

LOVELACE.

[Going to ESTHER. Ardently.] Mistress Esther—I adore you—. I can't live without you—.

ESTHER.

Yet it is but ten days since we met—.

LOVELACE.

But 'twas love at first sight. Say that you'll go to France wi' me—.

ESTHER.

No—no—I must refuse.

LOVELACE.

Hah—then you love another?

ESTHER.

I do not care to leave England—.

LOVELACE.

But I'll not take "no" for an answer—[seizing her hand.]

ESTHER.

It must be "no." [Breaking from him and leaving her handkerchief in his hand, moving down right.]

LOVELACE.

[To MRS. VAN HOMRIGH at centre.] If you'll speak a good word for me—?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Oh, your good lordship—'twill be a dozen words.

DUCHESS.

[*Impatiently.*] Well, nephew, well—?

LOVELACE.

Patience, Aunt, patience—.

DUCHESS.

Bah—let her take ye or leave ye—[*Exits door 1 quickly, followed by her servant.*]

LOVELACE.

[*To MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.*] I'll return for her answer in an hour.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Your good lordship—'twill be "yes."

LOVELACE.

[*Kissing her hand.*] Ah-h—Mistress Molly—.

MOLLY.

Your lordship—[*curteysing, LOVELACE kissès her hand. RICHARD enters door 1 pauses there, taking in the scene. LOVELACE sees him, purposely waves ESTHER'S handkerchief toward her, kisses it as he nears RICHARD.*]

RICHARD.

[*Meeting him at left.*] That handkerchief—?

LOVELACE.

[*Again pressing it to his lips with smile to ESTHER.*] 'Tis a gift from your fair cousin—.

RICHARD.

You lie—[*reaching for and getting handkerchief.*] You stole it—.

LOVELACE.

[*Hand on sword.*] Give it back to me—.

RICHARD.

[*Holding up handkerchief, hand on sword.*] Come and take it—if you dare!

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

RICHARD—! [*Clinging to his arm.*]

RICHARD.

Leave go, aunt—[*To LOVELACE.*] Well, sir—?

LOVELACE.

I fight wi' equals only—[*hurrying to door 1.*]

RICHARD.

Equals, eh? Ha ha—[*LOVELACE hurries out door 1.*] I'll see the whelp off the premises—[*going through door 1 on the run.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Oh—oh—for Richard to insult—the heir to a crown—

MOLLY.

But isn't Dick the young divil? An' his lordship IS a whelp—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

His lordship's offered his hand and his fortune to your sister. So Richard's sharp tongue nor Esther's obstinacy shall interfere not one whit wi' what's best for my child's future—.

ESTHER.

[*Agitatedly.*] No, mother—I'll not accept. My body is my own—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

The body that I gave ye! An' never think that I'll let ye refuse this splendid offer. To be "her Grace" when

that harridan dies—to be welcome to Court—. So, 'tis settled. An' when his lordship returns—.

ESTHER.

[*Pleadingly.*] Mother—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Be silent, Miss. Years hence ye'll thank me for makin' a Duchess of ye—Molly, wasn't it tomorrow that the ould harridan said his lordship was to cross to France?

MOLLY.

Yes, mother, tomorrow.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Then while I look o'er Hesses wardrobe, do you, Molly, make her see what's best for her—[*exits door 3.*]

ESTHER.

Ah—[*sinking at table with tears.*] Molly—Molly—was ever a poor girl so beset—.

MOLLY.

But, HESSIE—it IS a splendid offer and not one girl in ten thousand'd refuse it. A coronet—to be "her Grace" at some future day—.

ESTHER.

But I despise the man—My soul revolts at the thought of—[*covering her eyes.*]

MOLLY.

You've refused ten good offers in as many months—.

ESTHER.

Because I cared for—not one of them.

MOLLY.

[*Going to her, tenderly.*] Hess—is't because you care for someone else? [ESTHER rises and moves away agitatedly.] Tell me, Esther—.

ESTHER.

Ah—don't ask me, Molly—don't ask me—[*throwing herself down again at table with covered eyes.*]

MOLLY.

[*Going to her, taking down her hands.*] Tell me, Hess, isn't it the Dean that you love?

ESTHER.

[*Agitatedly, after a moment.*] Yes—Molly—yes.

MOLLY.

But—does the Dean love you?

ESTHER.

[*Wildly.*] I know not—I only know that I've given to him my heart—my soul—.

MOLLY.

Ah—poor Esther—I'm afriad 'tis a waste o' affection—. You have no chance—.

ESTHER.

[*Startled.*] You mean that some other woman—.

MOLLY.

I mean that Swift thinks naught but of Tory politics and the getting of the gown o' Canterbury—.

ESTHER.

No—no—I'm sure you're wrong.

MOLLY.

But has the Dean ever *said* that he loved you?

ESTHER.

But—his poem of yesterday. Here—next my heart—.

MOLLY.

Pretty words—like bright beads on a string—.

ESTHER.

But “for wifely duty—” “*For wifely duty,*” Molly?

MOLLY.

Ah—. If that be *all* your proofs, Hess! Swift is sure to hear of this, your latest offer—.

ESTHER.

[*Quickly.*] No—no—I’ll never tell him—.

MOLLY.

Because—? [ESTHER *drops into chair with covered eyes.*] And when he does hear—Let us put the Dean to a test—.

ESTHER.

I dare not—.

MOLLY.

You must, Hess. And if he advises you to go to the arms of another than himself—A test—a test—!

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Entering again.*] Two great trunks are ready. An’ what’s lackin’ Hess can buy in Paris—. Well, Molly—’tis all settled, then? Your sister consents—.

MOLLY.

[*Aside to her mother.*] ’Twill be wisdom to let Hess alone for awhile—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

But—his lordship's to return for his answer in an hour—.

[JEEMS *appears at door 1.* SWIFT *enters in black satin knee-breeches, jacket, silken stockings, silver-buckled shoes, "shovel" hat and linen bands. His look is gracious, as of one sure of welcome.*]

JEEMS.

Doctor Jonothan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin—
[SWIFT *gently pushes JEEMS aside, he salutes, exits.* MOLLY *turns delightedly to SWIFT.* MRS. VAN HOMRIGH *comes smilingly forward.* ESTHER *starts to come down, pauses at right again.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Presenting her brow.*] Welcome, Mister Dean—.

SWIFT.

[*Pressing his lips to her brow with a comic, comradely smile to MOLLY.*] Your servant, ma'am—.

MOLLY.

[*With extravagant curtesy.*] Hail—g-r-e-a-t genius o' the world—. Hail—Majesty!

SWIFT.

[*Pinching her ear.*] Silence, ye witch. Wi' thy tongue waggin' like a church-bell on a Sunday mornin'—.

ESTHER.

Ah [*tapping a foot, jealously.*]

MOLLY.

[*Indicating ESTHER, in lower tone.*] Beware—beware—.

SWIFT.

Pooh—pooh! A chair—a chair for a weary man—
[MRS. VAN HOMRIGH and MOLLY *daintily dust a chair with handkerchiefs and draw it down. With pretended pomposity, sinking into chair.*] Of what use are slaves but to wait upon me—?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

'Deed, Mister Dean, you're right welcome this very minute—.

ESTHER.

[*Appealingly.*] Mother—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

Be silent. For the Dean shall hear. Doctor, wi' no man at the head of this house—.

SWIFT.

[*Gravely.*] At your service, ma'am.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

There's Esther, blind to the luck that's ready at her hand—.

ESTHER.

But, mother, a woman's heart-affairs can be of no interest to the Dean—.

SWIFT.

[*Teasingly.*] And how do you know that, Miss?

ESTHER.

[*Agitatedly.*] Ah then—[*sitting off at right.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

Hesses offer of a week ago—the Yorkshire baronet as swears his son's the finest in the kingdom—.

SWIFT.

But, ma'am, doesn't every ape believe that his are the finest monkeys?

MOLLY.

Ha ha ha—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

But another offer—an hour since—[ESTHER utters a bitter cry.]

SWIFT.

[To help ESTHER.] My coffee—My coffee—. Where's my coffee—.

MOLLY.

[Dragging her mother to right.] Come, mother, let's prepare the coffee—the brown beans that his Majesty loves—[Taking MRS. VAN HOMRIGH out door 2.]

SWIFT.

[Looking over at ESTHER who taps her foot again. SWIFT smiles, reading her mood.] Esther—[she takes no notice.] Esther—[as before.] Humph—[rising, moving to escritoire, lifting and dropping articles there, yet watching ESTHER under his brows.] Cards—in daylight? and the rouge-pot not far off—? [ESTHER starts at the insinuation. Going to her, looking down at her as on a peevish child, then lifting her face. Half-banteringly.] Esther—'tis that thy soul is jealous because—.

ESTHER.

[Getting away. Passionately, tearfully.] 'Twas to Molly that you spoke first—.

SWIFT.

Just as I'd speak to a child that hung about my knee—[sighing, returning to sink into chair as if weary.] Yet—in all London 'tis to you only that I am myself—.

ESTHER.

[*Radiant, nearing the chair.*] Ah-ah—.

SWIFT.

[*Moodily.*] Myself that you're so fond o' finding fault with—.

ESTHER.

[*Behind his chair, her hand on his shoulder.*] Ah—forgive me—.

SWIFT.

For just as I begin to forget that you are a woman—.

ESTHER.

[*Recoiling, to herself.*] A woman!

SWIFT.

Out blazes that sharp tongue o' thine, demanding submission—.

ESTHER.

[*As before.*] Submission!

SWIFT.

'Tis my heart—my weary heart you'll be attackin' next—[*in moody revery.*]

ESTHER.

[*Coming to his side. Tenderly.*] Forgive me, Swift. But for two long days you've been away—.

SWIFT.

Yet half the time my thoughts were here—away from the quarrels o' the Tory ministry—.

ESTHER.

[*Hurrying to bring a footstool and to sit at his feet. Radiant.*] Oh—how proud—how proud you make me? Ah, Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Absently twining a curl but NOT as a lover would.*] Silly flatterer—.

ESTHER.

'Tis the truth—the truth—[*laying her cheek on his hand.*]

SWIFT.

[*Withdrawing his hand.*] Cease, thou foolish child—.

ESTHER.

And your poem of yesterday—[*touching bosom.*] See—'tis here—.

SWIFT.

Pooh—a jingle o' words—rhymes that mean nothing—.

ESTHER.

[*Taking out, kissing, replacing poem.*] Here—next my heart—.

SWIFT.

Pah—destroy the thing—.

ESTHER.

Nay, I'll keep it forever!

SWIFT.

[*Moodiness rising to fierce anger.*] Would that Lord Treasurer Oxford were as kind. He calls me "Jonothan" and "friend Swift." But I begin to believe that his ministry means to leave me as they found me—a hedge-parson—flattered—caressed and *neglected*!

ESTHER.

[*With deep sympathy.*] Would Lord Treasurer DARE—after his promises—over his own signature?

SWIFT.

Promises? The promises of a politician! Hell is paved with them! The Tory ship o' state is weatherin' the storm—'Tis the "Irish parson's" kept it afloat these three months—. Delvin' into problems to fatten the treasury—reachin' after ends so hard to find that my pillow's not known me for many a night—.

ESTHER.

What base ingratitude! But Canterbury—'Tis reported that tonight—at Lord Treasurer's gardens you're to get your commission—.

SWIFT.

Pah—I'll believe that when I hold the parchment in these two hands—[*moving agitatedly about. Then, explosively.*] Nay—'twill be better to leave London—.

ESTHER.

[*Aside, agitatedly.*] Leave London? [*Covering her eyes.*]

SWIFT.

And kill the demon of ambition that's devourin' me! [*In surprise, going to her.*] Esther?

ESTHER.

[*Recovering.*] Ah—don't mind me—.

SWIFT.

[*Lifting her face.*] Are those tears that I see?

ESTHER.

[*Moving away.*] Nay—'tis just—the vapors.

SWIFT.

Nay, Esther—'tis the shadow o' my unhappy self demandin' thy soul's sympathy—.

ESTHER.

Nay—you are wrong—.

SWIFT.

[*Gayly.*] Ah then—'tis an idle young hussy that'd better be shakin' her heels to the tune o' a fiddle than be listenin' to the woes o' a gown o' forty-four—.

ESTHER.

I tell you—you are wrong.

SWIFT.

Then Hess, you're in love. Tell me the name o' the lucky man—.

MOLLY.

[*Warningly, from door 3.*] Ahem—[*coming down, followed by* MRS. VAN HOMRIGH. *SWIFT's manner has not changed. But* ESTHER's *has. She flies to the escretoire, snatches up red book, pretends to read.*] Your Majesty's coffee's ready—.

SWIFT.

Ah—ye good child—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

[*Frowning at* ESTHER.] 'Deed, Mr. Dean, I greatly deplore that you've taught Hessie to love books—[*MOLLY sits at harpischord, softly touching keys but listening to the others.*]

SWIFT.

Ye'd rather, ma'am, she'd feed a parrot or entertain some brute in human form?

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

Aye—that would I! For Hess, this very instant, shud be thinkin' o' choosin' a life-mate—.

MOLLY.

[*Touching keys but speaking the words.*] "For 'tis love that makes the world go round—."

SWIFT.

Silence, ye witch—.

MOLLY.

"And leads us all to matrimony—."

SWIFT.

"Wi' its attendant children—sickness—discord and loathing—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

[*Covering her ears.*] Stop, doctor—stop—.

SWIFT.

Love? Call it "thief" that'd rob ye of wit—call it "Lucifer" that—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

Stop—Doctor—. 'Tis heresy—. 'Twill corrupt my girls an' make spinsters of them both—. Come—coffee is served—[*Pleadingly.*] Bid Esther make a choice an' please me!

SWIFT.

[*With mock seriousness.*] She shall, ma'am—she shall this very day.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH

A million thanks, Doctor—[*hurrying to right and out door 2.*]

SWIFT.

[*Going slowly to right, a girl clinging to each arm.*] Hess—Ye heard me give my promise to your good mother just now? Faith, ye *shall* choose, this very day—.

ESTHER.

[*Demurely.*] But matrimony—with its attendant children—.

SWIFT.

[*Pausing with them.*] Hah—.

MOLLY.

Sickness—discord and loathing—.

SWIFT.

Of all the PRE-tentious young hussies—[*All laughing, going out door 2.*]

RICHARD.

[*After a moment RICHARD enters door 1. He looks about him with a frown, hears SWIFT and MOLLY laugh, stares at door 2, then comes down.*] Drink coffee with Swift? I will NOT. [*Throws himself into chair in boyish misery, bites his nails, mops his eyes. LEWIS appears at door 1 with JEEMS. Dismissing JEEMS, LEWIS enters. Hears the gay voices from right, notes RICHARD's agitation. He nods knowingly, comes down softly behind RICHARD and pokes his ribs. RICHARD springs up savagely.*] Who the devil—.

LEWIS.

[*Laughing.*] No—. But a distant relation—.

RICHARD.

Pardon me, Lewis. But I've the most infernal toothache—.

LEWIS.

Nay, Richard—a heartache. But I know a cure.

RICHARD.

Then in God's name give it me.

LEWIS.

[*In guarded tones, indicating door 2.*] The Dean—?

RICHARD.

[*Sullenly.*] Is there—taking coffee with the ladies—as usual.

LEWIS.

You must be aware, Richard, that your cousin Esther's name—here in London, is being coupled with that of Swift—.

RICHARD.

Hah—the Dean is fortunate—.

LEWIS.

But there lives in Dublin *another woman*—.

RICHARD.

[*Coarsely.*] Oho—the “pious parson—.”

LEWIS.

His ward—who dwells in his house—receives his friends—. Swift'll marry Mistress Stella Johnson when he wins Canterbury—. So that your cousin should be warned—.

RICHARD.

Damn your parson! As for “warning” the lady—warn her yourself—and be hanged to you—[*hurrying through door 1.* LEWIS *smiles, shrugs, moves toward door 2, listens, makes as if to enter, then changes his mind, coming down as—*]

JEEMS.

[*Entering door 1 followed by a richly-dressed, middle-aged peer, on his breast a badge of office. Announcing.*] My Lord Bolingbroke, Secretary of State—[*salutes him, exits.* BOLINGBROKE *enters.*]

LEWIS.

[*Greeting BOLINGBROKE familiarly.*] Ah—Mister Secretary of State—You've come for coffee, as usual?

BOLINGBROKE.

Not for coffee—this time. And—the Dean?

LEWIS.

In Mistress Van's coffee-room. I'll summon him—.

BOLINGBROKE.

Er—not yet, Lewis—not yet. [*Taking parchment from breast, with anxious look at door 2.*] Fact is—I want to ask a favor of the Dean—.

LEWIS.

Which Swift'll grant—that is, if it's anything in reason—.

BOLINGBROKE.

But it happens to be something *not* in reason—.

LEWIS.

Better not ask it, then.

BOLINGBROKE.

Nor would I—had I not promised an old friend—er—her Grace of Marlbro—.

LEWIS.

Her Grace—! asking a favor for her Grace of Marlbro, who's stood between Swift and Canterbury these two years? Why, sir—Swift'll *never* grant—.

BOLINGBROKE.

Would to heaven I'd not promised. But—since young Lovelace is my god-son—.

LEWIS.

Lovelace—your god-son? Gad, sir, I wasn't aware that—.

BOLINGBROKE.

A relationship I've never mentioned because of the youth's profligate career. But since her Grace vows that a change of scene may save him—a trip to France—.

LEWIS.

With the Embassy? Good God, man, with a record like your god-son's—Swift is sure to refuse. Aha—fancy sending the nephew of the bitterest of Whigs to France with the Tory Embassy! No—no—it can't be done—.

LOVELACE.

[*Pushing JEEMS aside rudely and hurrying through door 1.*] I say, god-father—[*Exit JEEMS.*]

BOLINGBROKE.

[*Sharply.*] Didn't I warn you, sir, to remain outside?

LOVELACE.

And I warn *you*, god-father, that I stir not one step to France without Mistress Esther—.

LEWIS AND BOLINGBROKE.

Mistress Esther?

LOVELACE.

Whom I love—adore! Her Grace was here an hour ago—.

BOLINGBROKE.

Her Grace—*here?*

LEWIS.

Humph—[*turning away.*]

LOVELACE.

I swear to't. Her Grace asked for me—most formally—for the lady's hand—. As for the lady herself—*[foppish gesture.]*

LEWIS.

Your god-son must reckon with Swift on this, sir.

LOVELACE.

With the "parson"? I fancy not. 'Tis an affair between hearts and *not* dirty politics.

LEWIS.

[With scornful gesture.] Pah—.

BOLINGBROKE.

[Haughtily.] If my god-son's offer to the lady be made in good faith—.

LOVELACE.

My honor on't, god-father—my sacred honor—.

[Door 2 opens. MOLLY and ESTHER appear. LOVELACE makes to exit at door 1 but changes his mind, retreating to beyond harpischord. BOLINGBROKE, passing harpischord, places parchment on it. MRS. VAN HOMRIGH and SWIFT follow the two girls down. SWIFT'S face still wears a smile.]

BOLINGBROKE.

Servant, ma'am—*[kissing MRS. VAN HOMRIGH'S hand.]* Ladies—.

LEWIS.

Morning—morning—*[exchange of salutes, laughter, all coming down.]*

BOLINGBROKE.

[Saluting SWIFT as he comes down as an equal.] Morning, Swift—*[SWIFT briefly nods, going to table.]*

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Gentlemen—'tis not too late for coffee—.

LEWIS AND BOLINGBROKE.

Not today—another time—[MOLLY *joins* LOVELACE *at harpischord*. LEWIS *joins* ESTHER *down right-front*.]

SWIFT.

Well, Bolingbroke—?

BOLINGBROKE.

[*Nervously*.] A favor at your hands, Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Imperiously*.] Business first, Mr. Secretary o' State—. My orders 'bout the fleet?

BOLINGBROKE.

To Spain, as you advised—.

SWIFT.

And—the envoy to Holland?

BOLINGBROKE.

Gone as you suggested—.

MOLLY.

[*Laughing*. To LOVELACE.] Nay—you flatter us all—.

SWIFT.

[*Discovering* LOVELACE. *Frowning, at table*.] Hah—.

BOLINGBROKE.

Gad, sir, you've cut out enough work for the Tory ministry to last a for'night—.

SWIFT.

[*Meaningly.*] Yet England's Secretary o' State finds time to waste wi' fops an' fools—[LOVELACE *puts hand on sword.* MOLLY *leaves the harpischord and joins ESTHER.*]

BOLINGBROKE.

But—unfortunately my god-son—. Er—Swift—as you are aware, the Embassy to France is short of a secretary—the place will suit a young friend of mine—.

SWIFT.

[*Briefly.*] Then give it him!

BOLINGBROKE.

You agree to that?

SWIFT.

Pooh—why should I refuse?

BOLINGBROKE.

Er—because the youth is—of the opposite camp—.

SWIFT.

What, sir—a Whig? Nay—nay—not while there are plenty o' young Tories for the place—[LEWIS *moves to harpischord.*]

BOLINGBROKE.

But—to keep a promise to an old friend—Why, sir, with your name on this voucher—[*hurrying to bring down parchment from harpischord and spreading it to table before SWIFT*] every door in France will open to my god-son—.

SWIFT.

[*Jeeringly.*] What—send yonder fop an' fool to France wi' the Embassy? [LOVELACE *with a muttered word puts hand on sword.* LEWIS *smiles, forbids with shake of the*

head.] Yonder rake—wi' ambition no higher than the laces at his wrist—? Stand sponsor for HIM? I will not. Ye must be mad, Bolingbroke, to ask that as a "favor." [*Discarding parchment.*]

BOLINGBROKE.

But suppose the youth has a change of heart? [*Crossing to ESTHER.*]

SWIFT.

What's his change o' heart to me?

BOLINGBROKE.

But—since the lady's well known to you—[*bringing ESTHER to center and leaving her there, where she stands agitated, silent.*]

SWIFT.

[*Going to ESTHER. In lower tone.*] Good God, child, is this he that ye love? This ne'er-do-well—this titled rake—[*MRS. VAN HOMRIGH hurries to SWIFT.*] Ah—I can *not* believe it—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Nay, doctor—your promise of an hour ago—that Esther make a choice—.

SWIFT.

But, ma'am—to hand your daughter over to this—this—Ah-h—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Pah—'tis just court gossip—nothing more. And wi' a wife to steady him—.

SWIFT.

Ah—the pity of it—the pity of it—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

But consider, sir—a *future duchess*! The strawberry leaves o' a crownet—.

SWIFT.

Ah-h—Where's the woman in a' London'd refuse the chance? Bolingbroke—[*leaving ESTHER and returning to sit at table with moody look.*]

BOLINGBROKE.

Swift?

SWIFT.

That parchment—I'll sign.

BOLINGBROKE.

Lewis—[*who finds pen and ink-pot on escritoire. He brings both to table where BOLINGBROKE smilingly spreads the parchment open. Presenting pen with a bow.*] Sign here, sir—[SWIFT takes up pen, stares at parchment, pauses moodily, watching ESTHER as LOVELACE hurries to take her hand.]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Tearfully, joyfully, to MOLLY.*] Ah—Molly—a future duchess for thy sister—a duchess—.

LOVELACE.

Mistress Esther—so ye'll go to France wi' me tomorrow—[ESTHER withdraws her hand.] Nay—nay—let me teach you what love means—I adore you—.

ESTHER.

[*With a low cry.*] No—I'll not listen—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Scandalized.*] ESTHER!

LOVELACE.

[*Flippantly.*] Give me time, ma'am—give me time and your fair daughter will—.

SWIFT.

[*Dashing down pen, rising and coming down quickly.*] Looke, sirrah—.

LOVELACE.

[*Insolently.*] What now, sir?

SWIFT.

Since this house hath no master—as a friend of all under this roof—. This marriage—Is her Grace aware—.

LOVELACE.

Her Grace was here an hour ago and asked for the lady's hand—.

SWIFT.

Bolingbroke—? You vouch for the truth of this?

BOLINGBROKE.

Yes. Since my god-son's sworn it on his word of honor—.

SWIFT.

His "word of honor!" Pah—[LOVELACE'S *hand again on sword.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

My word for't, Mister Dean. 'Twas her Grace as asked me—.

LOVELACE.

[*To ESTHER.*] 'Tis as good as done, Mistress—.

SWIFT.

And—the ceremony is—when?

LOVELACE.

Since the Embassy means to cross channel tomorrow—
[*taking ESTHER's hand again.*]

SWIFT.

Tomorrow!!! [*Looks at ESTHER with pity, utters a deep sigh, moves to table, takes up pen.*] Bolingbroke—
I'll sign after all—[*Signing parchment.*]

LOVELACE.

[*Taking ESTHER down front. In low, ardent tones.*]
Mistress Esther, why so cold a look?

ESTHER.

I have told you that I do not love you. Would you marry me, knowing that?

LOVELACE.

Yes—I would—I will. Marry me—give me time to win you. Marry me—go to France with me tomorrow—to France, where the nights are brighter than the days—France—the land to love in—Ah, Mistress Esther! In France, with me beside you—you'll soon surrender to the passion that's consumin' me—Ah—beautiful body that'll soon be in my arms—[*Embracing her.*]

ESTHER.

No—no—you must not—you shall not—[*Getting away and coming down front agitatedly.*]

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

[*Going to her, in low tones.*] Child—are ye crazy?

ESTHER.

I warned you, mother, that my body was my own—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

Your conduct is scandalous. Ye shall ask pardon this minute—[*Bringing ESTHER down to LOVELACE.*] Your good lordship—.

ESTHER.

[*Appealingly.*] Ah, mother—[MRS. VAN HOMRIGH joins MOLLY at harpischord.]

LOVELACE.

All's forgiven mistress.

ESTHER.

[*Surrendering to fate with a bitter cry.*] Ah—.

LOVELACE.

[*Clasping ESTHER.*] Mistress—you are mine—mine.

SWIFT.

Looke, Lovelace—the name o' the parson's to tie the knot—[*Coming down quickly.*]

LOVELACE.

[*Angrily.*] Am I a child that must recite a lesson? Besides, 'tis an affair between Mistress Esther and myself only—[*seizing ESTHER again.*]

SWIFT.

[*Roughly thrusting LOVELACE aside and stepping between him and ESTHER.*] Come—his name—the parson's name—.

LOVELACE.

I tell you 'tis not your affair. [*Reaching across SWIFT to ESTHER.*] Come away with me, Esther—.

ESTHER.

No—no—I will not—I hate—despise you—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

ESTHER!

SWIFT.

[*Putting ESTHER behind him. Fiercely, to LOVELACE.*]
So, sirrah—'twas a mock marriage ye'd planned—.

MRS. VAN HOMRIGH.

A mock marriage? My—oh—my—[*weeping into handkerchief.*]

[*DUCHESS and mute servant with JEEMS appear at door 1. DUCHESS signals to JEEMS—he vanishes.*]

SWIFT.

A mock marriage—[*walking almost over LOVELACE with savage look, pointing to door 1.*] Liar and perjurer—
Get ye hence—[*LOVELACE recoils.*]

DUCHESS.

[*Insolently, coming down, the mute remains at door.*]
What, sir Dean, be this the language to address to MY
nephew and an English peer?

SWIFT.

Ah—your Grace is just in time to hear—. Yonder
rascal had planned a mock marriage—he'd have made of
Mistress Esther—.

DUCHESS.

His mistress? Ha ha—What—mistress to a future
Duke? 'Twould ha' made the girl famous. Tilly-vally,
sir Dean—.

[*SWIFT crosses to DUCHESS and eyes her with a glance of scorn. She quails and recoils with a gesture of fear. Then, abruptly turning his back on her, coming to BOLINGBROKE and touching the badge on his breast. Sternly.*]
Beware, mister Secretary o' State, lest the "Irish parson"
deprive ye of your place in Parliament—.

BOLINGBROKE.

[*Agitatedly.*] I call Lewis to witness, sir, that I believed the offer an honorable one—.

SWIFT.

Bah! [*Going to table, snatching up, tearing the parchment across and discarding the pieces. Indicating LOVE-LACE who has backed to left.*] As for that place on the Embassy—ye can put yonder ass to graze elsewhere! [*Pointing to door.*] Go, sir, go. The very air's polluted that ye breathe—.

[*LOVELACE, with hand on sword, suddenly turns, rushes past the DUCHESS and exits door 1.*]

ESTHER.

[*As MOLLY runs to her at centre.*] Ah—Molly—[*both faces radiant—the test a proof of SWIFT'S love for ESTHER.*]

DUCHESS.

[*Coming down a little.*] Hah, Swift—ye shall rue this day. Ye shall rue it—. This insult to my house—.

SWIFT.

As for your Grace—[*going to door 1 lifting the drapery, with genial smile*] we bid you good morning.

DUCHESS.

[*Pausing under the drapery.*] An' though 'tis reported that ye win the gown o' Canterbury at Lord Treasurer's dinner tonight—your commission signed an' sealed—.

SWIFT.

[*Genially, as before.*] A very good morning—.

DUCHESS.

Hah—. I'll yet find a way to thwart ye—.

SWIFT.

[*Genially.*] Try it, your Grace—and see which of us—
will win!

[*SWIFT holding back the drapery with genial smile. The DUCHESS glaring at him over her shoulder, the Indian mute beyond. ESTHER and MOLLY with radiant faces, watching SWIFT. MRS. VAN HOMRIGH at harpischord, weeping into handkerchief, consoled by LEWIS, who smiles a little. BOLINGBROKE sits at right with bent head.*]

CURTAIN.

End of the Second Act.

THE THIRD ACT.

SCENE—LORD TREASURER'S GARDEN, LONDON. *Evening of the same day.*

A wide lawn with a fountain or a parterre of flowers at its centre. Half-circling this is a rustic seat round which most of the incidents occur. At left, at the rear, is a massive gate opening inward from the road. To right of gate along the rear is a platform, a few shallow steps leading to its top. To extreme right of this platform is the door to the banquet-room. Along the top of the platform is a breast-high grillwork. Below it the road leading off to both right and left. At the foot of platform are two pedestals holding lighted flambeaux. At the base of both pedestals is dense shrubbery or vines about three feet high. Along both right and left of lawn is shrubbery and beyond the left side are trees. Rustic seats here and there. Many colored lanterns, and a moon rising on distant sky.

At rise—The English Court in full regalia—the Tory Ministry and their friends. A minuet being danced down centre to the music of an unseen orchestra. A footman stands at gate.

[The minuet ends, the dancers move off. Two extravagantly dressed ladies with escorts pause before the curved seat.]

LADY NETTLETON.

[Young, vivacious.] Listen, friends.

HER FRIENDS.

Let's hear—little Nettle—let's hear.

LADY NETTLETON.

Maria Monckton's "diamonds" be all of paste.

HER FRIENDS.

OF PASTE!!!

LADY NETTLETON.

Yes. At the Ballington ball last night, they fell to the floor and exploded.

HER FRIENDS.

EXPLODED!!!

LADY NETTLETON.

Well—when they fell from her bosom they broke into bits—.

HER FRIENDS.

Into bits? Ha-Ha-Ha—.

LADY NETTLETON.

But I never believed she'd paid all those guineas for them—.

HER FRIENDS.

[*All moving to right.*] Nor I—nor I—.

LADY TATTLETON.

[*A duplicate of LADY NETTLETON and friends come to seat.*] Listen, friends—stop and listen.

HER FRIENDS.

Tell us—Let us hear—.

LADY TATTLETON.

'Tis reported that when her Majesty, last week, sent a messenger for the key of the royal bed-chamber, her Grace o' Marlbro took it from her bosom and flung it on the floor—.

HER FRIENDS.

FLUNG IT ON THE FLOOR—her Majesty's gold key—Oh—Oh — .

LADY TATTLETON.

Yes. "There it is," says she. "And give it to whom ye like." Then her Grace shed tears—.

HER FRIENDS.

SHED TEARS? Ha-Ha-Ha—.

LADY TATTLETON.

Tore off her wig and danced on it—.

HER FRIENDS.

Danced on her wig? OH-OH—.

LORD HARCOURT.

[*An elderly Peer wearing a badge of office joins the group.*] Did you know that her Grace's nephew goes not to France with the Embassy? [*Cries of "not to France" and "why not?"*] Because the Dean refused. [*Applause.*] And the best news of all—[*cries of "Let's hear."*] 'Tis reported that the Dean's commission lies in her Majesty's bed-chamber—.

LADY TATTLETON AND FRIENDS.

[*Startled.*] *In the Queen's bed-chamber?*

HARCOURT.

Yes. When her Majesty's physicians told Lord Treasurer that she was ill—[*Cries of derision*] he insisted that she was well enough to trace her signature on a bit of parchment—[*applause*] so he left it there and is to send for it within the hour.

LADY TATTLETON AND FRIENDS.

Bravo the Dean—Viva Swift—Canterbury.

HARCOURT.

[*Indicating a middle-aged Peer with splendid badge of office as he comes from door of banquet-room.*] Hist—our host—Lord Treasurer—.

OXFORD.

[*Coming down steps and greeting friends. In his hand is a small white tablet.*] Welcome, friends, welcome—.

GUESTS.

[*Saluting him.*] Lord Treasurer—Oxford—.

HARCOURT.

[*Joining OXFORD down front.*] Oxford—is it true that the Dean's to get his commission tonight, here in your garden?

OXFORD.

Yes. I had almost to force my way into the Queen's bed-chamber—.

HARCOURT.

Then you don't believe she's ill?

OXFORD.

[*Frowningly reading tablet.*] Most certainly not. Some trick of those damnable Whigs. Oh—she'll sign. I've no fears on *that* score.

HARCOURT.

Thank heaven, we Tories have paid our debt to Swift at last. So her Grace—.

OXFORD.

After a battle against the Dean for two long years—her Grace loses the game after all.

HARCOURT.

Then—why your worried look, Lord Treasurer?

OXFORD.

Why? [*Striking the tablet.*] Look, you, Harcourt, This tablet holds the name of every Tory invited to this dinner—yet but half of them are here—the other half—[*biting his lips.*]

HARCOURT.

The other half?

OXFORD.

[*LEWIS comes down.*] The other half is ready to follow my Secretary of State into the other camp—.

HARCOURT.

Bolingbroke to go over to the Whigs? Hah, sir—I can't believe—.

OXFORD.

But I've proof of it—proof of it!

LEWIS.

My Lord Treasurer—could hear you clear to the gate—.

OXFORD.

Pooh! since we're among friends—. And doesn't all England know that those damnable Whigs have been trying—these many months to turn out the ministry—seducing our friends—actually, at this very moment guarding the Queen's bed-chamber—?

LEWIS.

[*Startled.*] Guarding the Queen's bed-chamber? For what reason, sir?

OXFORD.

Under pretence that she is ill and needs the ministration of *all* her friends, no matter of what camp—. Ill—though but yesterday she gave audience to three ambassadors.

LEWIS.

But, Oxford—Swift's commission for Canterbury—?

OXFORD.

It lies this moment within the royal bed-chamber all but signed—. I've but to send a messenger for it—.

LEWIS.

Good news indeed—.

OXFORD.

To balance the bad news that Bolingbroke's been dicker-ing with the Whigs—.

LEWIS.

[*Startled.*] Ah—?

OXFORD.

Yes. But where's the Dean? Why is he so late—since I am giving this dinner in his honor?

LEWIS.

[*Laughing.*] He's probably keeping those "lazy beggars" as he calls them, waiting his pleasure.

OXFORD.

I wish he were here. I feel more secure with Swift at my elbow. [*Moving off with HARCOURT and LEWIS.*]

[*A commotion at gate as the DUCHESS enters alone, extravagantly dressed and painted. Laughing guests make way for her with sneering remarks which the DUCHESS ignores as she comes down to curbed seat where she sits, calmly spreading out her splendid dress and waving her fan.*]

LADY TATTLETON.

[*Coming down with escort to seat. Sweetly.*] Why—your Grace—'mong Tories?

DUCHESS.

[*Gayly.*] Why not, little Tattle—wi' the rest o' the rag-tag an' bob-tail o' the Court?

LADY TATTLETON.

But—alone? And without your great “general,” the Duke? And at whose invitation is your Grace here?

DUCHESS.

Begone, little Tattle an' wash off some of that paint—.

LADY TATTLETON.

Am no more painted than yourself that's old enough to be my grandam! [*Moving off with escort.*]

LADY NETTLETON.

[*Nearing DUCHESS with escort.*] Her Grace o' Marlbro! No—no—I must be mistaken—.

DUCHESS.

Aye—'twas only yesterday that I heard ye were losing your eyesight. [*Low laughter of guests at LADY NETTLETON'S expense.*]

LADY NETTLETON.

But my eyesight's good enough to behold the ninth wonder o' the world—the bitterest o' Whigs—at a *Tory dinner*—.

DUCHESS.

Aha—the tenth wonder—the report that you've already planned to elope wi' your youngest footman—.

LADY NETTLETON.

'Tis a lie—a lie—[*stamping her foot, tearfully appealing to friends who softly jeer at her. To DUCHESS.*] Oh—you wicked woman! [*Friends carry LADY NETTLETON off. Again the DUCHESS calmly arranges her draperies, ignoring the sneers about her.*]

OXFORD.

[*Coming down right with LEWIS and discovering the DUCHESS.*] Look—Lewis—look, her Grace of Marlbro—.

LEWIS.

Gad—so it is—. At whose invitation?

OXFORD.

I'll ask her. [*Crossing to DUCHESS, followed more slowly by LEWIS.*] Your Grace—?

DUCHESS.

[*Smiling, with the smallest of bows.*] Eh, Oxford—?

OXFORD.

Your Grace—at a *Tory dinner*?

DUCHESS.

An' why not, Lord Treasurer—if the cookin' be good?

OXFORD.

Here—at whose invitation, may I ask?

DUCHESS.

On my own. Like the rest o' the world I'm here to see the g-r-e-a-t Dean get his commission—.

OXFORD.

[*Frowning, coldly turning away.*] Humph—.

DUCHESS.

[*Rising.*] Ah well—since ye don't want an old woman at your dinner-table—[*turning as if to go.*]

OXFORD.

[*Coldly.*] The “old woman” is welcome—[*Moving off with LEWIS to right.*]

DUCHESS.

[*Again insolently returning the glares of those about her as she spreads her draperies on seat.* BOLINGBROKE enters gate, comes down, saluting guests as friends. As he nears the curved seat, the DUCHESS sees him, taps the seat with her fan, with a smile.] Bolingbroke—.

BOLINGBROKE.

[*Startled at seeing her, with a hasty glance about, he joins her.*] Your Grace here?

DUCHESS.

[*Merrily.*] An' why shudn't I be here?

BOLINGBROKE.

But—in Lord Treasurer's gardens! *Your Grace among Tories—!*

DUCHESS.

Come, sit ye down here—.

BOLINGBROKE.

No—no. I must refuse. Has Oxford—.

DUCHESS.

Discovered me? Ha ha—he has.

BOLINGBROKE.

What said he to you?

DUCHESS.

Mighty little when I told him I'd come—like the rest o' the world, to see Swift get his commission—.

BOLINGBROKE.

Then he's not heard of that affair of this morning—.

DUCHESS.

My nephew's love affair? Pooh! Let him hear. And thanks for the loan of your coach—.

BOLINGBROKE.

Had I known that your Grace's reason for borrowing my coach was—[*agitated*] to visit this garden—.

DUCHESS.

[*Merrily.*] Ye wouldn't ha' loaned it, eh?

BOLINGBROKE.

Ah—your Grace has ruined me with Oxford—.

DUCHESS.

But since ye'e been quarrelling wi' him these many months. But—listen to the real reason o' my being here. 'Tis to answer Swift's challenge o' this mornin'—to see *which of us will win.*

BOLINGBROKE.

Then I hope to heaven your Grace will lose.

DUCHESS.

Well, I'll take a chance. [*Seeing OXFORD coming down. Merrily.*] Hah—Here's a rod in pickle for ye—.

OXFORD.

[*Sternly.*] Bolingbroke—.

BOLINGBROKE.

[*Saluting. Deprecatingly.*] Oxford-Lord Treasurer—.

OXFORD.

Mister Secretary of State—this rendezvous—*with her Grace—in my garden*—At this dinner given to Swift—'Tis an insult to the Dean as well.

BOLINGBROKE.

'Tis not meant to be. Let me explain.

OXFORD.

This is the second "favor" you've extended to her Grace today! That place on the Embassy for her rascally nephew—.

DUCHESS.

[*Merrily.*] Tut, tut, Oxford—let my relatives alone—.

OXFORD.

[*Ignoring DUCHESS.*] Report reaches me that you visit Blenheim—.

BOLINGBROKE.

But as a friend—as a friend only. Believe me, Lord Treasurer—.

OXFORD.

That you hobnob with the Whigs there—listen to offers to betray your party—.

BOLINGBROKE.

[*His hand on sword.*] He who say that—LIES!

OXFORD.

[*His hand on sword.*] This—to your superior in the Ministry—[*Both swords cross at centre. Guests gather with cries of alarm. The DUCHESS cackles merrily and rises to see the better.*]

LEWIS.

Bolingbroke—[*disarming him, returning sword and taking him to rear.*]

HARCOURT.

Lord Treasurer—[*disarming him.*] Before your guests, the ladies—? [*Returning sword and leading OXFORD off to right.*]

DUCHESS.

[*Merrily, addressing guests.*] What—must ye always be needing the “Irish Parson” to keep the peace between ye? Swift—who makes laws for e’en the Queen—forbids paint, powder an’ beauty spots to the Maids o’ Honor—By my coronet—Swift’ll yet be askin’ ye to kiss his slipper—.

[*A commotion near gate. SWIFT enters in splendid court suit of satin, a slight touch of powder on his black wig. He comes down between the double lane of admiring guests. He smiles at guests, not saluting them. His face beams, plainly showing he feels his hour of triumph is near.*]

DUCHESS.

[*Startled.*] Hah—'tis Swift—[*Brazenly seizing the arm of the nearest male guest and making him promenade with her at right, within hearing of SWIFT.*]

OXFORD.

[*Meeting SWIFT at centre with extended hands.*] Welcome Swift—Welcome, Archbishop of Canterbury—[*Loud cries of "Swift" and "Canterbury."*]

SWIFT.

[*Shaking OXFORD's hands, laughing.*] Canterbury? Aha—not yet, Oxford—.

OXFORD.

When your commission lies at this moment in the Queen's bed-chamber?

SWIFT.

Nay, Lord Treasurer—until I hold it in these two hands—.

LEWIS.

Hail—King of Tories—.

SWIFT.

Bah—I'd rather be King o' Hades—for then my subjects'd be less unruly—[*Guests murmur and quiet down.*] Oxford, had I known that I was to serve as "a lion"—[*With sudden disdainful look at guests.*]

OXFORD.

[*Laughing.*] Nay, Swift, you see here the flower of England's nobility.

SWIFT.

Corrupt politicians an' a licentious Court—[*Guests murmur.*] Oxford, where's the bill o' your company—?

OXFORD.

[*Giving tablet.*] 'Tis here, Swift.

SWIFT.

[*Disdaining to read to himself.*] Duke o' Ormonde? He'll do. Earl Peterbro—Harcourt—Shrewsbury—Rivers—[*mutteringly.*] Prior—[*suddenly striking the tablet.*] Hah—NOTTINGHAM!! When ye know, Oxford, that he'd sell us Tories for a bag o' ha'pence—[*Tossing the tablet back to OXFORD.*] Either I dine wi' honest men or not at all—.

OXFORD.

[*Beckoning a footman whose belt denotes a higher rank than his fellows.*] Right, Swift, and—as he's not yet arrived—[*whispering to footman, who salutes, exits quickly through the gate.*] 'Tis corrected, Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Mollified.*] Ah—[*Beginning to view guests as cabbages.*] What's to amuse me here? Three dukes—four "noble" earls—thrice as many Lords—[*Discovering the DUCHESS. Pointing to her merrily.*] Hah, Oxford—is't a convert ye have there? [*Low laughter of guests.*]

OXFORD.

[*To humiliate DUCHESS.*] Pooh—'tis just—her Grace of Marlbro.

SWIFT.

[*Peering at the DUCHESS under his hand.*] Faith—so 'tis! Come to see "the Irish parson" get his gown? [*Saluting her.*] Swift is mightily honored—yes—an' pleased!

DUCHESS.

[*Raising a clenched hand.*] Hah, Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Abruptly turning his back on her. To HARCOURT who presents a richly-dressed guest.*] Well, Harcourt?

HARCOURT.

Swift—this is Lord Comstock—[*guest bows deeply.*]

SWIFT.

[*Insolently, ignoring guest.*] Bah—Harcourt—have too many “lords” on my list already—.

OXFORD.

[*In lower tone, laughingly.*] Gad, Swift—Comstock’s neither Whig nor Tory—.

SWIFT.

Neither—? in *times like these*? He must be neuter gender then—.

OXFORD.

Also a distant relative of her Grace’s—.

SWIFT.

[*Disdaining to lower his voice.*] Pooh! What’s her Grace’s “relatives” to me—or her ancestors either?

DUCHESS.

Thank God there were no “parsons” among ’em!

SWIFT.

[*Gemially.*] No such good luck, ma’am.

OXFORD.

[*Laughing.*] Desist, Swift, desist.

SWIFT.

[*Superbly.*] Pooh! Why should I? Isn’t this *MY* dinner, Oxford?

[*The DUCHESS with a gesture of fury, suddenly dropping her escort's arm, rushes up steps into banquet-room to laughter of guests.*]

OXFORD.

To dinner, friends—[*Guests begin to move to rear.*]
Come, Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Seeing MOLLY with young escort entering gate.*] In a moment, Oxford. [OXFORD leads guests to banquet-room door, waiting there for SWIFT.]

MOLLY

[*In extravagant dress, comes to centre with escort. With a sweeping bow.*] Hail—Majesty—.

SWIFT.

[*Smiling and pinching her cheek.*] Molly, ye witch—stop that trick o' droppin' to your knees—.

MOLLY.

Your Majesty looks splendid tonight—! G-r-a-n-d! O-O-OH—.

SWIFT.

Another curts'y an' I'll have ye ordered from yonder gate. Where's Esther?

MOLLY.

On the road with Richard—.

SWIFT.

Ah—The young jade's always late—[*cries from banquet-room of "Swift."*]

OXFORD.

[*Coming down a little.*] Swift—your guests await you—[SWIFT motions to MOLLY, she hurries up steps with escort into banquet-room. SWIFT and OXFORD follow. SWIFT is greeted at the door with clapping of hands, he bows, enters, OXFORD follows, the door closes, voices continuing to be heard from there.]

[*A slight pause. Then ESTHER and RICHARD enter. ESTHER is simply dressed. About her waist is a soft, silken white sash. RICHARD is in military dress, white cloth cuffs, short sword, powdered wig. ESTHER enters quickly, instantly intent on voices from right. RICHARD follows with agitated looks. He goes straight to the curved seat and throws himself on it with covered eyes. ESTHER looks at him, goes up a step or two, looks back at RICHARD, frowns and comes down to behind seat.*]

ESTHER.

Richard—.

RICHARD.

[*Turning to her appealingly.*] Esther—cousin Esther—.

ESTHER.

Ah—why cannot you be satisfied with a plain “no?”

RICHARD.

Esther—.

ESTHER.

[*Impatiently, eager to get to banquet-room.*] I’ve told you a dozen times, Richard, that I can never marry you. So ask me not again.

RICHARD.

Esther, your refusal means exile to me!

ESTHER.

[*Startled.*] Exile? You'd give up home—friends, country, and your career in the army—.

RICHARD.

All—all, and bury myself where dangers lurk—America!

ESTHER.

Silly boy—[*Renewed cries of "Swift," "the Dean" and "Canterbury."* Applause. ESTHER hurries to steps quickly.]

RICHARD.

[*Jumping up, follows, seizing her arm.*] Esther—.

ESTHER.

Let go—how DARE you, Richard—?

RICHARD.

[*Bringing her down and flinging her to before him.*] But before I go you shall answer me one question—.

ESTHER.

I'll answer no question of yours, Richard—.

RICHARD.

Then I'll ask and answer the question myself. *You refuse me? Why? Because you love the Dean—.*

ESTHER.

[*Covering her ears.*] I'll not listen—I'll not listen—.

RICHARD.

The Dean who's promised to another—.

ESTHER.

Not listen—.

RICHARD.

To Mistress Stella Johnson—who lives in his house—receives his friends—.

ESTHER.

'Tis false—'tis false—.

RICHARD.

When Swift wins Canterbury he'll marry Mistress Stella—.

ESTHER.

[*In tearful triumph.*] Whom he left to return to me—to me—.

RICHARD.

OHO—OHO—HA HA—.

ESTHER.

[*Sobbingly.*] Oh—cruel Richard, cruel Richard—
[*Rushing through shrubbery to left.*]

[*RICHARD falls agitatedly on rustic seat, bites his nails, weeps into his handkerchief till renewed cries of "SWIFT" "the DEAN" make him scowl toward banquet-room. Then, deciding to pull himself together, he mops his eyes and throws back his shoulders boyishly. A scream comes from left.*]

[*Springing up, his hand on sword.*] Esther's voice—
Esther—[*running to left and through shrubbery. A slight pause. Then SWIFT and HARCOURT come from banquet-room, the door closed, down to front.*]

SWIFT.

[*Frowning.*] Now, Harcourt—since you've spoiled my dinner—.

HARCOURT.

[*Agitatedly.*] I tell you, Swift, there's mischief brewing—our enemies, the Whigs—.

SWIFT.

Pho—wi' the bitterest o' 'em eatin' Oxford puddings yonder?

HARCOURT.

But isn't it like her Grace to be on hand when the blow falls?

SWIFT.

[*Startled.*] The blow—what blow d'ye mean?

HARCOURT.

This continued report of the Queen's illness—.

SWIFT.

An' you'd spoil my dinner because an old woman's got an ache in her toe? Bah—.

HARCOURT.

From my seat at table—next to her Grace, I could distinctly hear her whisper to Comstock that *her Majesty's lain in a coma all afternoon—*.

SWIFT.

A COMA? Hah! we must look into *that* report. Go you to the palace—insist on seeing the Queen—be she ill or well—[*both hurrying to gate*] and return here without delay—Your coach—.

HARCOURT.

At the foot of the hill—.

SWIFT.

Make haste, Harcourt, I'll await you here—.

HARCOURT.

But—your guests—why not join them—.

SWIFT.

[*Pushing HARCOURT to gate.*] No—no—I'll await you here—Hurry—[HARCOURT *exits through gate and off to right, to road.* SWIFT *comes down to seat, sinks on it as if anticipating the worst.*] What if this report be true—What if the Queen expires without signing my commission—what if Canterbury is lost to me? It would mean that *I'm to die on Irish soil—like a poisoned rat in a hole!!* [A scream from left. SWIFT *comes out of his troubled thought as ESTHER backs in at left through shrubbery, her dress awry, her sash falling off, her looks agitated as she stares to left.* SWIFT, *his woes forgotten, hurries to take her hand.*] Esther—[ESTHER *struggles to get away as if not recognizing SWIFT.*] Esther, child—'tis Swift—fear not—.

ESTHER.

Ah Swift—[*pointing to left.*] He will kill my poor cousin—.

[*Clash of swords and savage cries come from left. Then, through the shrubbery LOVELACE backs in, his sword crossing that of RICHARD'S. On LOVELACE'S white silken shirt is a crimson stain. RICHARD backs LOVELACE in, a crimson stain on one white cuff. Both reach the centre. ESTHER falls agitatedly onto curved seat.*]

SWIFT.

[*With raised hand walking between the swords.*] Stop—Stop. The meaning of this? [LOVELACE *lowers his sword and begins sullenly to dig its point into the ground.*]

RICHARD.

[*Putting up his sword.*] I found Mistress Esther struggling with two footmen in the woods yonder—*footmen in the Marlbro livery*—.

SWIFT.

[*To LOVELACE.*] Ah—?

LOVELACE.

'Tis a lie—they were no servants of mine—.

SWIFT.

[*To RICHARD.*] And—Her Graces' nephew—?

RICHARD.

Skulking behind the trees—in *safety*. [*ESTHER goes to RICHARD and begins to bind his wounded wrist with her sash. RICHARD ignores this.*]

LOVELACE.

'Tis another lie—ye can't prove it—I'd just arrived there—[*The Indian servant comes through the shrubbery with LOVELACE'S jacket and offers to put it on. LOVEEACE snatches it and flings it across his shoulder. The Indian stands stolidly beyond with folded arms.*]

SWIFT.

A lie, was it? With her Grace's footman to prove it truth? So—'tis not only a kidnaper but a LIAR as well—[*nearing LOVELACE*] and as neither is worthy to wear a sword—[*snatching the sword from LOVELACE'S hand, bending it across his knee, breaking it, tossing the pieces aside.*]

LOVELACE.

Hah—my aunt shall hear of this—[*turning and going to right.*]

SWIFT.

My compliments to her—and—ha ha—show her that wound in your back. [*The belted footman of OXFORD enters gate. He presents a letter to SWIFT who takes it quickly, tearing it open. LOVELACE rushes up the steps into banquet-room, closing the door. The Indian turns to left shrubbery. SWIFT points to him, speaking to the belted footman.*] Send yonder footman from these gardens. [*Reading the letter without interest. The belted footman gestures to the Indian, who turns, moves to gate without haste, then exits to right. The footman runs up the steps, whips off his belt and bends over the grillwork as if lashing the Indian an instant, then enters the banquet-room—a rapid pantomime. The letter hastily finished, SWIFT thrusts it into his bosom.*] As for you, Richard—see to your wound.

RICHARD.

'Tis a mere scratch, sir. [*To ESTHER, snatching away his bandaged hand.*] Farewell, Esther—I sail tonight—[*Hurrying through the gate.*]

ESTHER.

[*Sinking agitatedly on curved seat.*] Ah—poor Richard—

SWIFT.

He sails tonight? For what port, Esther?

ESTHER.

For—for America.

SWIFT.

[*Mistaking her agitation as he moves to behind the curved seat.*] Esther—Richard's a fine fellow—the makings of a splendid man—He truly loves you, I'm sure.

ESTHER.

[*With rising bosom.*] Ah—cannot you understand that—.

SWIFT.

But, since a woman must marry—why not take a master whose faults are known to her?

ESTHER.

Marry—Richard? No—No—.

SWIFT.

[*More lightly.*] Ah—'tis because you love another?

ESTHER.

Yes—yes—.

SWIFT.

Some Court dandy—beruffed and befrilled?

ESTHER.

[*Suddenly rising and facing him, her words a torrent.*] Ah—you shall know all now—though you might have guessed it long ago—[*with extended arms and transfigured looks.*] Swift—SWIFT—.

SWIFT.

[*Recoiling.*] ESTHER—.

ESTHER.

[*Sobbingly.*] Ah Swift—I was nothing till you taught me how to think—to love what you loved—to despise what you despised—.

SWIFT.

[*Coming from behind seat.*] Esther—as there's a God in heaven I never dreamed of this—.

ESTHER.

You have made me what I am and I am yours—
[*about to throw herself on his breast.*]

SWIFT.

[*Taking her hands instead.*] My child—[*Falling on seat with covered eyes.*]

ESTHER.

[*Dropping at his knee.*] You are my all—on earth—in heaven—[*Her head upon his knee.*]

SWIFT.

[*Brokenly, looking down on her.*] Child—'Tis blasphemy! [*Struggling for self-control while he gently touches her hair.*] Esther—[*Lifting her face.*] Listen. You shall know me as I am—a miserable wretch—hawk-ing his few talents about the earth—grovelling before yonder Tory lords for the pittance they've promised me—a bishop's gown—[*agitated, silent a moment.*]

ESTHER.

Ah Swift—[*looking up and laying her hand on his shoulder.*]

SWIFT.

[*Preventing this. With anguish.*] Listen, child. For years I've been like a blasted tree—.

ESTHER.

[*Startled, pityingly.*] Swift—.

SWIFT.

For what the world calls genius has oft been near to madness—and there have been hours *when I have been mad*—when it would have been better to flee away—.

ESTHER.

Then take me with you—and were this madness to overtake you—Ah—let me be your slave till then—your willing slave—.

SWIFT.

[*Mournfully.*] And is this the reward of all my teachings?

ESTHER.

I love you—I love you!

SWIFT.

[*Taking her hand.*] This hand—so white—these lips so eloquent o' promises were I so base as to accept the sacrifice—[*Rising and lifting her to her feet. In lighter tones.*] Nay, child—keep thy sweet self for a worthier than I—.

[*Confused sounds come from banquet-room door. Laughter, the DUCHESS' angry tones. SWIFT puts ESTHER behind him, his eyes to right. MOLLY rushes through banquet-room down to ESTHER.*]

MOLLY.

[*With tears, clasping her sister.*] Esther—my poor Esther—.

SWIFT.

[*Eyeing the banquet-room door as he pushes the girls to gate.*] Go—Go—Esther—Molly—my coach at foot of the lane—Patrick'll see ye safely home—.

MOLLY.

[*Half-dragging ESTHER to gate.*] Come—Esther—come—.

ESTHER.

[*With appealing arms to SWIFT.*] Swift—Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Watching door intently as he waves the girls to go.*]
Go—Go—I'll see ye tomorrow—[*MOLLY carries ESTHER through gate and off to right. SWIFT, at centre, awaits affairs with tranquil look.*]

DUCHESS.

[*Coming from banquet-room with look of fury. Guests follow her on with suppressed laughter, gaily anticipating her defeat at the hands of SWIFT. LOVELACE is in the crowd, being jostled and teased by the others, his jacket now on. Coming down.*] A liar, is he? An' the sword of a British noble's to be broken like a common flail?

OXFORD.

[*Coming down from door quickly. Sternly.*] Your Grace—this uproar—in my garden?

DUCHESS.

But, Oxford, the Dean's to blame. My nephew, pacin' the woods yonder—.

SWIFT.

[*Merrily.*] Gazin' at the moon—.

DUCHESS.

Was set on by a rascally friend o' the Dean's—.

SWIFT.

Who wounded him—in the back! [*Laughter of guests.*]

OXFORD.

If your Grace will take your departure—.

DUCHESS.

[*Throwing herself on curved seat.*] But how can I, Lord Treasurer, when I have no coach?

SWIFT.

[*Pointing meaningly to left.*] You'll find your coach—there!

DUCHESS.

Pooh! My nephew's love-affairs are no concern o' mine.

SWIFT.

Hah—*convicted!* Then get ye to Blenheim afoot!

DUCHESS.

How dare ye, Swift—How dare ye—? [*Mopping her eyes.*]

BOLINGBROKE.

Swift—Lord Treasurer—[*Deprecatingly.*] Her Grace came here in my coach.

OXFORD.

In your coach? Hah—.

SWIFT.

[*Laughingly.*] Oxford, we Tories need a new Secretary. [OXFORD crosses to BOLINGBROKE, removes the badge from his breast and turns to SWIFT.]

SWIFT.

To Lewis—Yes. [BOLINGBROKE falls on curved seat with covered eyes. OXFORD meets LEWIS at centre, places the badge on his breast.]

GUESTS.

Lewis — Lewis — Secretary of State—[*clap hands,* LEWIS bows.]

OXFORD.

Lewis, your first official duty—to the palace and bring back to us Swift's commission. [SWIFT is surrounded, applauded. He smiles as if sure now of victory. Ox-

FORD beckons the belted footman, speaks to him. The footman detaches the left flambeaux, goes to gate. LEWIS follows quickly, both heads seen as they go along the road below the grillwork. The DUCHESS sits on the curved seat, a little space away from BOLINGBROKE, her back to him.] Come, Swift, come, friends, back to table. [SWIFT and OXFORD go up steps and enter banquet-room. Guests follow with backward looks at the DUCHESS which she tries to ignore. Door closed.]

LOVELACE.

Come, Aunt—[Going to her.]

DUCHESS.

[Striking him with her fan, tearfully.] Be silent, ye young fool. See where your "love-affairs" ha' landed me. Beaten—Beaten—Sarah o' Marlbro—Beaten by an Irish parson! Oh—Oh—.

BOLINGBROKE.

[Mopping his eyes.] Disgraced—ruined!

DUCHESS.

Looke, Bolingbroke—since the Tories have kicked ye out, why not come wi' us Whigs?

BOLINGBROKE.

Leave my party? Never!

DUCHESS.

But ye well know that—[in lower tone] if the Queen's illness is mortal the Tory Ministry falls. If ye'll come in wi' us now, I'll help make ye Premier—.

BOLINGBROKE.

[Rising and mopping his eyes.] Even at that price—.

DUCHESS.

What—ye refuse a Premiership?

BOLINGBROKE.

Yes—even at that price. [*Saluting.*] Goodnight, your Grace.

DUCHESS.

[*Crossly.*] Goodnight an' ye can take your coach wi' ye.

BOLINGBROKE.

But—your Grace—.

DUCHESS.

Yes. Ye mean that as Swift has ordered me out o' these gardens—[*Throwing herself on curved seat.*] But here I stay a bit longer, just the same.

BOLINGBROKE.

If you think to outwit the Dean even now—?

DUCHESS.

Aye—even if his commission lies in her Majesty's chamber. Which does *not* prove that she has signed it.

BOLINGBROKE.

Ah—thank heaven, I can assure you *that she has*.

DUCHESS.

WHAT!! When all afternoon she has lain helpless!! I'll not believe it!

BOLINGBROKE.

But, this morning I saw it signed and sealed.

DUCHESS.

[*Collapsing.*] *So Swift wins after all!*

BOLINGBROKE.

Yes. Goodnight, your Grace—[*Exit at gate.*]

LOVELACE.

[*Coming from left.*] Aunt, maybe you'll come home with me now.

DUCHESS.

[*Fiercely waving him away.*] No—no—no—Not even now!

LOVELACE.

Then you'll remain here, like a sick cat on a doorstep? Be sensible, Aunt—Come away.

DUCHESS.

Aha—not while there's one chance in a million left. I'll sit me here an' wait for that chance. So ye may run along.

LOVELACE.

But since you can't get home afoot, I'll wait for you in the woods yonder—[*Exit again through left shrubbery.*]

[*The DUCHESS walks agitatedly about a moment. Then, looking to right, she notes the head of the belted footman above the grillwork as he makes his way to gate. She retreats to behind shrubbery at foot of the right pedestal. The following in rapid pantomime: The footman enters gate, in his hand a roll of parchment with flaring red seal and ribbons. At his heels follows the Indian, dagger in hand. The footman, unaware of this, runs up the steps. The mute follows, stabs him, tears off the footman's belt and trusses the body. The parchment rolls down the steps. The DUCHESS rushes out, seizes it and swiftly tears the seal, reading it eagerly. The mute tosses the body over the grillwork to road. Then, seeing his mistress and fearing punishment, he runs down, kneels beside her. A wave of her hand assures him, he takes his place stolidly beyond her.*]

DUCHESS.

[*In triumph.*] 'Tis Swift's commission! His commission for Canterbury!! [*Making as if to destroy it. Then, laughing.*] Not yet—not yet—Ah—[*Seeing HARCOURT as he hurries along road beyond grillwork to gate, the DUCHESS again retreats, this time behind left pedestal, motioning the mute to follow.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Entering gate with agitation. Looking round for SWIFT. Then running to right.*] The Queen—The Queen—[*running up steps and into the banquet-room. A moment later cries of "The Queen" and "poor lady," from the banquet-room door. The guests stream on and down the steps, agitated, tearful, OXFORD leading. A moment later SWIFT enters, coming calmly down, self-controlled but prepared for the worst.*]

OXFORD.

[*Agitatedly, dismayed.*] Swift—you've heard Harcourt's report—of her Majesty's probably fatal illness?

SWIFT.

Yes, I've heard. What about my commission, Lord Treasurer?

OXFORD.

Heaven grant it has been signed—[*Guests point to LEWIS, seen beyond the grillwork as he hurries toward gate.*]

LEWIS.

[*Entering gate with agitation.*] Swift—Oxford—You've heard? [*falling on curved seat with covered eyes.*]

SWIFT.

[*With low laugh.*] Aye, Lewis—we've heard. But let's leave the poor lady to Him that made her. For a smaller matter concerns us now. My commission—.

LEWIS.

Which I sent, signed and sealed, ten minutes ago by Oxford's footman—.

SWIFT.

Which—aha—has not yet arrived?

LEWIS.

Wait. As I raced the road yonder my foot struck something—.

GUESTS.

[*Peering down over grillwork.*] The footman—the footman—.

SWIFT.

[*Accepting fate calmly.*] Humph—ha ha—.

OXFORD.

By heaven, if the Queen live but another hour she shall—[*moving to gate.*]

LEWIS.

But, Oxford—the Queen is dead. [*Renewed cries of sorrow from guests.*] Ah, Swift, the footman must have been waylaid—[*The DUCHESS steps boldly into view, but NOT the Indian. The commission is NOT in her hand.*]

SWIFT.

[*Meaningly, looking at the DUCHESS with a half-smile.*] And dead men tell no tales, eh?

DUCHESS.

[*Merrily.*] Ha-ha—sir Dean, ye'll be for havin' me drawn an' quartered yet—[SWIFT ignores her. Loud cries come from road. A mob, carrying banners and torches, comes from right and past gate. Stones begin to fall into the garden, catcalls, hisses and "Down with the Tories." OXFORD, LEWIS and HARCOURT go among guests to calm them. Two footmen rush on and fasten gate, remain there. The DUCHESS rushes up steps to grill-work, tears off her mantle and waves it to those below. Cries of "Marlbro—Marlbro"—come from mob. SWIFT stands smilingly down front listening to the cries. Suddenly the DUCHESS rushes down, beckons to the Indian who leaves the left pedestal and joins her. Following her gestures, he snatches the parchment from his sash, puts it between his teeth, climbs the right pedestal, and tosses the parchment into the flambeau, where it begins to blaze. He slips down again to stand stolidly at right with folded arms.]

LEWIS.

[*Seeing this too late, rushes to SWIFT and points to the blazing parchment.*] Swift—your commission—.

SWIFT.

[*Barely glancing at it over his shoulder.*] Aye, Lewis—aye—[*With a shrug.*]

DUCHESS.

[*Coming to SWIFT and indicating the mob. Genially.*] D'ye hear 'em, Swift?

SWIFT.

[*As genially.*] Your Grace's relatives, eh?

DUCHESS.

An' lightin' the g-r-e-a-t Dean—to oblivion!

SWIFT.

Mighty civil of 'em, ma'am. [*With a gesture toward burning parchment, his voice growing stern, his look such that the DUCHESS recoils.*] But yonder smaller fire—. If the Dean say the word—THE LAW—to which even a Duchess must bow—the law will consign a certain impudent female to the Tower—for life! [*The DUCHESS retreats to right as if in fear as a loud knocking begins at gate. The mob has passed off. OXFORD motions to a footman at gate. The footman unbars it.*]

FORD.

[*Entering quickly and looking eagerly round. Loudly.*] The Dean—I demand to see the Dean—.

SWIFT.

[*Meeting FORD at centre. Quickly.*] Ford—here—in London?

FORD.

This instant arrived—[*seizing SWIFT'S arm*] Mistress Stella—.

SWIFT.

[*Recoiling.*] Stella—Quick Ford, out with your news—. Stella is—.

FORD.

Ill—ill unto death—.

SWIFT.

Unto Death—? Come—Ford—come—[*both hurrying to gate.*]

OXFORD.

[*In dismay.*] Swift—you are leaving us at such a time?

SWIFT.

[*Near gate. Over his shoulder.*] Aye, Oxford—and this time—forever. Come, Ford, to Dublin and to Stella—.

[*SWIFT and FORD leaving gate. Deep boom of cannon. OXFORD and his Ministry despairing at curved seat. Guests continue to murmur. Two footmen go about extinguishing the lanterns, the moon rises on distant sky.*]

End of the Third Act.

ACT FOURTH. SCENE FIRST.

SITTING-ROOM OF THE DEANERY, DUBLIN, TWO MONTHS LATER. *Morning in October. The room has lost some of its attractiveness. The chairs are set primly against rear wall. The wire stand of plants and the green boughs in the chimney-place are no longer there. The round table is piled high with newspapers. SWIFT'S chair is now to right of table, facing directly left. On the right wall hangs an English flag, large letter T on its centre.*

DINGLEY *stands at table with a sour look, trying to bring order out of chaos, pausing now and then to read a printed newspaper heading with a sneer. PATRICK stands behind her, feather duster in hand, prepared to flick furniture, but slyly listening to DINGLEY and repressing enthusiasm.*

DINGLEY.

[*Reading.*] "'Gainst Evictions." Humph—and a very good way to be rid o' a bad tenant—to chase him into the open—"Right to Manufacture—."

PATRICK.

Huru-ur. [*Refraining to cheer.*]

DINGLEY.

When from England they can buy all they need an' better than they cud ever make it—As for this Copper Coinage—the Dean won the victory for them there—bad luck to't—.

PATRICK.

Huzz-a—.

DINGLEY.

And here's a demand for "Liberty." Faith—if they had it they'd not know what to do wi' it—Liberty forsooth—.

PATRICK.

Huzzaha-a-a—.

DINGLEY.

[*Wheeling on him and facing him off to right.*] What are ye doing here, ye lazy clout—pi'zinin' the air wi' your bawlin'—Be off—be off to your pantry—.

PATRICK.

Yis'm—yis'm—[*exits door 3.*]

DINGLEY.

[*Returning to table.*] Sure—sin' the Dean's returned the whole island's gone mad on "Liberty."

FORD.

[*Entering door 1 smiling, bouquet in hand behind him.*] Morning, Mistress Dingley — [*Slyly placing bouquet on mantel-shelf.*]

DINGLEY.

[*Half-sullenly.*] Morning, Mister Ford—.

FORD.

Still helping the Dean with his newspapers?

DINGLEY.

Aye—and a weary task it's been these two months. It wasn't eno' that Swift meddled with the business o' Queen Anne but he must be directin' the affairs o' her successor, the new King—.

FORD.

Bravo the Dean! [*Coming to help at table.*]

DINGLEY.

Sure, Swift, these two months has set fire to every soul on Irish sod—From the beggars to the nobility—makin' 'em think what he thinks an' makin' 'em see what he wants 'em to see—! Faith, his name is on every lip an' they say his picture's on every wall—.

FORD.

Bravo, the Dean—.

DINGLEY.

'Tis said that already there's a price on the head o' the writer o' those Drapier letters, which [*looking round, in lower tones*] the whole of Ireland knows is Swift—.

FORD.

And not a soul of them'll take the reward that is offered—.

DINGLEY.

Aye—an' though his Oxfords and his Bolingbrokes are swept away—[*pointing to the flag*] look there—.

FORD.

Viva Swift—still King of Tories!

DINGLEY.

[*Jealously.*] Ay—ye never saw fault in the Dean—.

FORD.

Nor ever will, Mistress Dingley. Where's the Dean this morning?

DINGLEY.

In garden wi' Mistress Stella.

FORD.

Ah—good news indeed!

DINGLEY.

Ah—he's mighty tender to her *now*—.

FORD.

[*Laughing.*] Now, now, Mistress Dingley—.

DINGLEY.

[*Snorting.*] Humph! [*After a moment, in lower tone.*] D'ye think that Swift's done wi'—that other?

FORD.

[*Purposely dense.*] What other?

DINGLEY.

Why—his Lunnun charmer—Mistress Esther—.

FORD.

Sh-h—[*warningly.*]

DINGLEY.

[*Snorting.*] Humph. [*After a moment.*] But—d'ye think he's done wi' her?

FORD.

Yes—yes. Quite done with her. I'm sure of it—.

DINGLEY.

[*Snatching a package of letters from drawer to table.*] Well—he's NOT done wi' her—See—Letters arrivin' every week—arrivin' whilst my poor Stella lay on her bed almost dying—[*beginning to mop her eyes.*]

FORD.

[*Peering at but not touching letters. In triumph.*] But ma'am, *they are unopened!*

DINGLEY.

[*Making sure of it. With regret.*] Aye, so they are! But—what's to prevent the Dean answerin' 'em later—?

FORD.

[*Displeased look, moving from table.*] Mistress Dingley—.

DINGLEY.

[*Half-weeping.*] Ah, Mister Charles—'tis NOT that I hate the Dean—no—no—'tis not that at all. 'Tis that he's been so blind to the love my poor lamb has had for him—so blind these many years—the Dean—that's crossed the channel but two months ago—.

FORD.

To aid his Tory friends—.

DINGLEY.

[*Passionately.*] To his Lunnun charmer's arms—to her arms! Hasn't Mistress White's letters told on him—How he was spending his free hours from court to tach a lovely girl how to speak Latin, Greek and, 'tis reported—love? Ah—'tis no wonder that—that I hate him! [*Replacing letters in drawer. Seeing the bouquet, crossing and bringing it to right.*] A love that even yourself'd be proud to win—.

FORD.

[*Bowing with hand on heart.*] Thanks, [DINGLEY goes to door 3.] But wait—.

DINGLEY.

[*Purposely dense, going.*] These shall adorn the dear girl's own chamber—.

FORD.

Mistress Dingley—Those letters—Mistress Stella must *not* know of those letters—.

DINGLEY.

An' why not? Twould sarve the Dean right to expose him—.

FORD.

What—would you lose him Stella?

DINGLEY.

Aye—an' would carry her off—to England! [*Exits door 3.*]

FORD.

[*Staring after her.*] To England!! [*In troubled thought a moment.*]

DELANY.

[*Entering quickly door 1, radiant looks, sprig of green in coat.*] Morning, Ford.

FORD.

Ah, Delaney—In gala attire?

DELANY.

Which all Dublin'll wear this day—Swift's birthday! Did ye notice the crowds round his Cathedral door—the flags on every house? Faith, St. Patrick's will not be half big enough to hold his admirers at service. Where is the Dean—where?

FORD.

In garden with Mistress Stella—

DELANY.

[*Turning to go.*] In garden, eh?

FORD.

[*Laughing and intercepting him.*] What—man—would you intrude?

DELANY.

An' why not, Ford?

FORD.

[*Meaningly.*] But Swift—and Mistress Stella!

DELANY.

Ah-h—! But, looke, Ford, today's NO day for the Dean to be me-anderin' 'bout wi' a petticoat—[*pose of orator.*] Wi' his country prostrate under the fut av her oppressors [FORD reads a newspaper with patient smile] wi' a tax on aven the leather o' her bare-futted peasantry—[*noting FORD's lack of attention. Hoarsely, confidentially*] Hist—Ford—a surprise for the Dean—.

FORD.

A surprise?

DELANY.

A surprise—and—a halo—a h-a-l-o-o—.

FORD.

A halo?

DELANY.

Wait an' see—[*hurrying left*] wait an' see—[*exits door 1.*]

[*After a moment PATRICK comes from door 2 followed by a choir-boy carefully bearing SWIFT's lustrous, black silken gown.*]

FORD.

Ah, Patrick—the Dean's best gown and 'tis NOT Sunday?

PATRICK.

'Tis for Thanksgivin' Sarvice, sor—.

FORD.

Oh—and the Dean must look his best today?

PATRICK.

Aye, Masther Ford—.

FORD.

Has Archbishop arrived yet?

PATRICK.

Not yet, sor—[*playfully cuffing choir-boy's ear and pushing him to right.*] Be off, now—an' kape the Dean's best gown fro' thrailin'—[*Exit boy door 3. PATRICK to door 2.*]

[*SWIFT enters door 1 half-bearing STELLA. She is pale, but smiling, in simple gray dress, in her hand a bunch of tulips. SWIFT's face is also radiant. FORD comes down quickly, but SWIFT slightly edges him aside, jealously, as he brings STELLA to settee, placing her there with little cries of affection, touches for her comfort.*] See, Ford, the color in her cheek, the sparkle in her eyes—. 'Tis the first time in garden in three long months. Ah, child—art given back to us—for which thanks be to Almighty God—.

STELLA.

[*Offering her hand.*] Charles—.

FORD.

[*With emotion, kissing her hand.*] Mistress Stella—.

STELLA.

And see—the last o' the Dean's tulips—though he forgives me for wanting them—.

FORD.

[*Retaining the hand but looking at STELLA.*] How lovely—but how frail—.

SWIFT.

[*Half-banteringly, edging FORD aside again.*] Is't Mistress Stella or the tulips you mean—?

FORD.

[*Stepping back confused.*] Ah, Swift—.

STELLA.

[*Playfully, to SWIFT.*] Mister Dean—.

SWIFT.

Forgive me, child. Now, thy medicine—[*hurrying to door 2. Half-banteringly.*] And looke, Ford—no more flatteries—[*exit door 2.*]

STELLA.

Charles—you've been so kind—so kind these weary months—.

FORD.

And am repaid—since the Deanery has gotten back its mistress—[*Taking her hand, earnest, lower tone.*] And the Dean—ah, Mistress Stella—be kind to *him*.

STELLA.

[*Understanding, averting her face.*] Have I not always been “kind” to Swift?

FORD.

Be *more* than kind—*be generous!*

STELLA.

[*Sweetly. Giving her hand.*] Ah, Charles—'twill be an easy task.

FORD.

[*Kissing her hand.*] Then I am content. [*From beyond door 1, rises a rollicking melody from a band. Cries of "The Dane"—and "Copper Coinage"—"Right to manufacture"—"Liberty"—"The D-A-N-E—"*]

SWIFT.

[*Coming from door 2, a small glass of medicine in hand. Frowning.*] That uproar—when my orders were that—during Mistress Stella's illness—

FORD.

[*Laughing.*] But—since half Dublin's seen you both walking in the garden—[SWIFT gives STELLA the glass, she drinks, returns glass to FORD who places it beyond.]

[*Rollicking melody now just beyond door. DELANY, followed by a dozen citizens with sprigs of green in coats, enters. Without saluting the others, DELANY intently places his friends in a straight line along rear wall. SWIFT throws himself into his chair to endure. Through the open door is seen the green-coated band playing away, beyond them a cheering crowd of men. His task finished, DELANY motions to left, the music and cheers fade off. FORD stands behind STELLA and both watch the scene with happy interest.*]

DELANY.

[*Coming to stand before SWIFT in pose of orator.*] Mister Dean—

STELLA.

[*Grimly.*] Now, Delany—get it off your mind.

DELANY.

Congratulations, sor—Your birthday—

SWIFT.

Pooh—What of it?

DELANY.

Which Erin's to number—hereafter, in her annual festivals—.

SWIFT.

No—no—I forbid—[*Cheers from door. Angrily.*] Someone close that door. [*A young reporter, pencil and book in hand, leaves the line in rear, crosses to door 1 gently waves crowd back, closes door and remains there, taking copy.* DELANY brings down each friend and mutely presents them. SWIFT almost rudely ignores them. They show no resentment, retiring to rear as PATRICK comes from door 2 with a large tray, on which many glasses of liquid. Music soft now.]

DELANY.

[*At centre, pose of orator.*] Mister Dean—fellow citizens—'tis an occasion—'tis an occasion—[*looking about him.*] Faith—something's wantin'—[PATRICK nudges his elbow with tray. DELANY brings a glass to SWIFT who rudely declines it. FORD brings one to STELLA, and one for himself. PATRICK makes the rounds. Raising SWIFT's rejected glass to STELLA.] To the Dean's inspiration for many a day—[*cheers.* STELLA half-rises, embarrassed, yet smiling, sitting again.] Gentlemen—here's to Irish Liberty—may Erin have the pr-r-roud pr-r-rivilege o' wavin' waistcoats for all av us an' thr-r-rousters for those that are left—[*laughter. Oblivious to his own bull.*] May Erin—.

[*Loud cheers from outside. Citizens point to the two-paned window over door 1 where the head and shoulders of a man appear, in his hand a laurel wreath. Cries beyond—"THE DEAN"—*DELANY crosses to SWIFT, mutely points to wreath, wanting him to speak. SWIFT refuses. DELANY takes counsel with his friends. They urge him forward. He goes to left, the wreath is dropped into his hand. From then on the man in window panto-

mimes to those without what takes place in the room, thus directing the cheers. DELANY blows his nose, clears his throat, wreath in hand and pose of orator, begins, with strong emotion and with eloquence, facing SWIFT but addressing citizens.]

Fellow-citizens—we are gathered here today to celebrate the birthday of the man—who—these many months, has fought and won for us so many civic victories. A strong soul—a brilliant mind—a tender heart. Fellow-citizens, time may come and time may go—but the name of Jonathan Swift will not only adorn the pages of History—but will be enshrined within every Irish heart—FOREVER. [*Crossing to SWIFT, to loud applause, DELANY hangs the wreath on the high back of SWIFT's chair—where it forms a "halo" for his head. Then, joining his friends, all crying as they go to left, the man at window dropping from sight, "To Lord Mayor"—"To Lord Mayor"—"Freedom of City"—"Freedom of City"—the band playing, all hurrying off. FORD salutes STELLA, then SWIFT, and follows after. Door 1 closed. Melody and voices fade off as PATRICK exits with glasses door 2.]*

SWIFT.

[*Making sure that door 1 is closed. Grimly.*] Thank heaven—that's over!

STELLA.

[*Radiant.*] But—your name on the pages of history—.

SWIFT.

I'll thank History to leave my name in peace—wi' the dust that shall be me—the peace that I've ne'er found on earth—[*Coming to STELLA. Remorsefully.*] Pale shadow of my darling girl—.

STELLA.

[*To comfort him.*] Nay, Swift—'twas only that you were so long away—!

SWIFT.

[*Bitterly.*] Aye—away chasin' shadows—will-o'-the-wisps that blinded me to the true gold within my Deanery walls—.

STELLA.

But now that you are home again—.

SWIFT.

Never again to leave it—[*Moodily, taking her hand.*] Some day you'll be givin' this little hand away—leaving the Deanery to brighten some good man's home—.

STELLA.

No—no—Swift—I shall never leave you—.

SWIFT.

[*Suddenly moving off, pondering. Then humbly.*] Child, there's but one way to make me sure of that—[*STELLA's radiant look shows she understands.*] Tell me—could ye be happy for life—wi' a man that's often moody and sometimes mad?

STELLA.

[*Half-rising, radiant.*] Swift—dear Swift—[*coming to him.*]

SWIFT.

[*Waving her to wait.*] Think well, child—'Tis a sacrifice I ask of you—.

STELLA.

A sacrifice? 'Tis an honor—AN HONOR—I will have it so—[*running to his embrace.*]

SWIFT.

[*Humbly, kissing her hand.*] Ah-h—I'm not worthy so sweet a gift—.

STELLA.

Ah, Swift—[*her head on his breast.*]

SWIFT.

Not worthy—.

STELLA.

And I've loved you so long—so long—.

SWIFT.

[*Moodily.*] And I—that was ever blind—.

PATRICK.

[*Coming from door 2.*] Yer Rivirence—.

SWIFT.

[*Frowning, instantly releasing STELLA.*] What now, sirrah?

PATRICK.

Archbishop waits in Cathedral—.

SWIFT.

[*Imperiously.*] Bid him await my pleasure—[*STELLA gently touches his arm, smiles. SWIFT's face clears. In softer tone to PATRICK.*] Ask of Archbishop ten minutes to enrobe—[*PATRICK salutes, exits door 2.*] And thou, child, shalt meet me after service—.

STELLA.

[*Falteringly.*] After—service—.

SWIFT.

In sacristy—.

STELLA.

In—sacristy—.

SWIFT.

Then straight to the altar-rails of my cathedral—where the Archbishop shall make of thee my wife—.

STELLA.

Thy wife—till death do us part—.

SWIFT.

Amen! [*His arm about her, he takes her to right. STELLA slips from his arms as if to open door 3. Then pausing there she looks radiantly back at SWIFT, throwing wide her arms. SWIFT, staring at her under his hand, backs to centre. STELLA comes to him quickly. SWIFT, with a strange, hoarse cry of complete surrender, kisses her, LINGERINGLY, on the lips.*]

STELLA.

Art happy now, Swift?

SWIFT.

At last—at last!

STELLA.

Ah-h—[*running from his embrace to door 3. Waving her hand there with radiant smile.*] To sacristy—to sacristy—[*exits.*]

[*SWIFT looks after her, sighs deeply, happily, stares round him as if in another world. Lifts the tulips from the settee, tenderly touches them with his lips, then places them on bookshelf.*]

[*JEEMS, in traveling dress, a letter in the hand behind him, with embarrassed looks, opens door 1, looks about, then enters.*] Ahem—Dr. Swift—your Reverence—.

SWIFT.

[*Turning, with pleased look.*] Ah, 'tis Jeems, in Dublin, so far from London—.

JEEMS.

Yes sir—[*looking down.*]

SWIFT.

Then you've left the good ladies Van Homrigh—. [*Sitting at table, reaching for pen and paper.*]

JEEMS.

Yes, sir—that is, sir—.

SWIFT.

'Tis a recommend for a place ye want here in Dublin? Shalt have it, too—[*writing.*] “To whom it may concern”—[*Repeating the written words.*]

JEEMS.

But, sir—that is, sir—I've not left the ladies Van Homrigh—.

SWIFT.

You've not? [*Discarding pen and paper and rising as if to end the interview.*] Then why are you here in Dublin?

JEEMS.

Your Reverence may have heard that—that Mistress Esther has been ill—.

SWIFT.

[*With indifference.*] Ill? I'm sorry, Jeems—.

JEEMS.

These many weeks. And, 'gainst her mother's wishes, sir, Mistress Esther is here—.

SWIFT.

Here—IN DUBLIN?

JEEMS.

In her coach, sir—at your gate—.

SWIFT.

AT—MY GATE?

JEEMS.

[*Timidly presenting letter.*] Her message, sir—.

SWIFT.

[*Savagely, striking letter from JEEMS' hand to table.*]
I'll not receive her message—[*snatching the bundle of letters from drawer and tossing them on table.*] Nor those—nor those—Take them back to her as I received them—UNOPENED!

JEEMS.

[*Affrighted, gathering up letters and backing to door 1.*]
Yes, yes, sir—.

SWIFT.

And—wait, Jeems. Tell her—from Swift—that she can see the Dean no more—. [*Exit JEEMS door 1.*]
Here—in Dublin—when I thought I'd made it plain to her that—Here—at my gate—[*Suddenly holding his head with his hands, his eyes closed, a look of agony on his face. Then, recovering, and staring about him as if waking from sleep. Sweet bells begin to chime softly.*]
Ah—'tis past—'tis past. And—with Stella beside me—all may yet be well—[*Rising, going quickly to right with beaming face. Exits door 3.*]

[*A slight pause. JEEMS cautiously peers in at door 1. Then he backs in, ESTHER, pale, weak, pushing him with her hands against his breast. In dark dress, cloak, a lace scarf over her head. JEEMS still carries the bundle of letters.*]

JEEMS.

[*Stepping aside as ESTHER comes down with wondering look and faltering step.*] Stay but a moment, Mistress—.

ESTHER.

[*Sinking into SWIFT's chair, her dreamy gaze moving about.*] So—this is Swift's home—Swift's home. What said he to you, Jeems, when you told him—.

JEEMS.

[*To spare her.*] Don't ask me, mistress—.

ESTHER.

[*Querulously, weakly.*] But I must know. Tell me, Jeems—.

JEEMS.

Well, then—he—he bade me tell you to return to London—to your mother at once—That's all, Mistress—.

ESTHER.

Ah—he that was ever kind—. Oh—that I might see him face to face—to ask of him—.

JEEMS.

[*Fearing discovery.*] Come, Mistress, 'tis time to go—.

ESTHER.

But—Jeems—I've come to see the Dean—.

JEEMS.

Yes—tomorrow—[*Trying to lift her from the chair.*]
Come away—.

ESTHER.

[*Resisting.*] No—no—I'm so weary—I'll rest here till
the Dean—[PATRICK *enters from door 2. Seeing him*
with joy.] Ah—Patrick—Patrick—.

PATRICK.

[*Coming down.*] 'Tis Mistress Esther—but so changed
—so changed—[JEEMS, *behind ESTHER, signals to PAT-*
RICK.]

ESTHER.

I've been so ill, Patrick. But when I see the Dean
again—.

PATRICK.

[*Taking JEEMS' cue.*] Yes, Mistress Esther—tomor-
row—.

JEEMS.

Come to your coach, Mistress—.

ESTHER.

No—I will not—.

PATRICK.

But tomorrow, Miss—tomorrow—.

ESTHER.

[*Rising with sudden fire.*] I shall see the Dean—if at
the altar-rails of his Cathedral—.

PATRICK.

[*To JEEMS' look of dismay.*] Well, then—best ye wait
an' see him in the sacristy—.

ESTHER.

[*Eagerly.*] Which way, Patrick, which way? [*Moving to door 1.*]

PATRICK.

[*Following and opening door 1, pointing off.*] See that path yonder?

ESTHER.

Yes—yes—.

PATRICK.

Folly it an' it'll bring ye to the sacristy door—.

ESTHER.

[*Looking back gratefully.*] Ah— good—kind Patrick—[*Moving out, followed by JEEMS. PATRICK remains looking after them.*]

ACT FOURTH—SCENE SECOND.

Instant rise of curtain on scene already set.

SACRISTY OF ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN. *A wide, oak-panelled room. Three doors. Door 1 at left opens on a sunny, grassy court ending with an ivy-covered wall. Door 2 in back-centre, open and lighted, shows several white surplices and black cassocks within. Door 3 down right-front is a double door, leading by a corridor to the Cathedral. One side open at rise. Set high in the centre of the rear wall is a large stained-glass window, the sun shining through and focusing onto the massive reading-desk down centre, an open bible with crimson markings on same. At left is a baptismal font filled with bouquets, the donors' names on cards. A massive settee is along right. A stately scene, its gloom lightened by the stained-glass window and the bouquets.*

AT RISE—*People passing door 1 quickly, without looking into the sacristy, all going to the Cathedral service. Choristers sky-larking at centre in white surplices and black cassocks. A tall Precentor is giving out hymnals and trying to keep order. Distant boom of organ and faint chime of bells.*

PRECENTOR.

Order there—order—S-h-h—*[A boy comes through the double door with raised hand as he opens both sides of door, awaiting SWIFT.]* Open hymnals—page fourteen—yes—page fourteen I said—S-h-h—*[SWIFT comes through double door with gracious smile. All salute him.]*

SWIFT.

All's ready, Precentor?

PRECENTOR.

[*Indicating door 2 with salute.*] All's ready, reverend sir—.

SWIFT.

Precentor, you must make me look grand today. For, after service—detain your choristers—shall want 'em for—Well—detain 'em—[PRECENTOR salutes, precedes SWIFT into door 2 which he closes. FORD enters door 1. He looks about him, beckons a boy, whispers, the boy nods and points to door 2. FORD smiles, begins to read names on bouquets, the boy rejoins his fellows. A slight pause. Then SWIFT, stately in cassock and white surplice, comes from door 2, followed by the PRECENTOR, who rejoins his boys at the end of the line.]

SWIFT.

[*Meeting FORD at centre with beaming look.*] Ford—.

FORD.

[*Giving his hand.*] Swift—. Your Cathedral is crowded—to see the lion of the hour—.

SWIFT.

[*Laughing.*] Who'll be a forgotten mouse tomorrow. But—I care not—for—after service Stella gives herself to me—.

FORD.

[*With emotion.*] Congratulations—.

SWIFT.

To me—unworthy me—Stella—the one woman I've always loved—And so—forever done wi' politics—

for—[*hurried look about, in lower tone.*] Looke, Ford—there's often a dizziness here—[*indicating brow*] an almost mortal agony—a sudden blank—Ah—[*clasping his brow with closed eyes and clenched hands.*] Ah-h-h—

FORD.

Heavens, Swift—[*in deep alarm.* SWIFT *recovers.*] Good God, sir—

SWIFT.

[*Faintly smiling.*] Nay—'tis past—'tis past—and with Stella beside me—a quiet fireside—all may yet be well.

FORD.

[*Seizing his hands.*] God grant it, sir.

SWIFT.

Then—after service—here in sacristy?

FORD.

With all my heart—my soul—[*wringing SWIFT'S hand, turning and exits door 3.* SWIFT *looks after him with beaming smile.* The PRECEPTOR *brings an open hymnal to SWIFT, salutes, goes to the last of the double line of boys, SWIFT follows, chanting with the rest as they slowly move to double door, the organ as accompaniment.*]

PROCESSIONAL:

O—worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness—
 Beauty of holiness—beauty of holiness—
 Let the whole earth stand in awe of Him—
 Awe of Him—awe of Him—
 Be Thou exalted above the heavens—
 And let Thy glory be above all the earth—
 O—worship the Lord—
 Worship—the L-o-r-d—

[*All exit through double door which closes, the voices gradually die, the organ continuing softly, the bells now silent.*]

[*A slight pause. STELLA enters door 1. She wears the same dress, a gray cape and a small bonnet of gray, its ribbons tied under her chin. She looks radiantly happy and enters quickly, making for the settee, on which she sits. DINGLEY follows. In dark dress, shawl and bonnet, with sour look, red-rimmed eyes, a handkerchief in her hand. She follows STELLA more slowly, making for the double door and listening there with set lips.*]

STELLA.

Dingley dear—[DINGLEY *pretends not to hear.*] Dingley—come here—[*patting the seat near her.*]

DINGLEY.

Then we're *not* to enter Cathedral—.

STELLA.

No—no—.

DINGLEY.

Not to hear those silly Irish rej'icin'?

STELLA.

The Dean's wishes are, that we await him here in sacristy—.

DINGLEY.

Humph—[*crossing unwillingly and sitting on settee.*]

STELLA.

Ah—Dingley—[*leaning her head on DINGLEY's shoulder.*] I'm so happy—so happy—Ah-h—.

DINGLEY.

It tuck Swift a l-o-n-g time to make up his mind—.

STELLA.

Now—now—Dingley dear—.

DINGLEY.

Ow-w-w—[*sobbing into her handkerchief.*]

STELLA.

[*An arm about DINGLEY.*] There, there, dear—never weep when I'm so happy—.

DINGLEY.

[*Getting away from STELLA.*] Lave me alone—lave me alone—. As for Swift—isn't he takin' ye away from me?

STELLA.

'Deed—'deed—nothing will be changed—.

DINGLEY.

I know better—[*imitating SWIFT's grand manner.*] It'll be "Mistress Dingley—the room for self and wife" or "To almshouse wi' ye, Dingley. Yer ould—an' useless—."

STELLA.

[*Coldly.*] Ah—you've always hated the Dean—and for no reason!

DINGLEY.

For no reason, is't? Was it "no reason" that ye fell ill because of him—"no reason" that—because o' his other charmer—.

STELLA.

[*Rising to move off.*] MISTRESS DINGLEY—.

DINGLEY.

[*Remorseful, catching her dress.*] Child—child—can't ye see that I'm only jealous?

STELLA.

Yet could coin a lie 'gainst the man I love?

DINGLEY.

[Fiercely, rising.] 'Tis NO lie—and lest I telle more—
[making for door 1.]

STELLA.

[Intercepting and bringing her down.] Now—tell me
all—ALL—or I must believe that Mistress Dingley is—.

DINGLEY.

A LIAR? Take it, then! Whilst ye lay ill Swift's
other charmer writ letters to him—.

STELLA.

[Recoiling.] Writ—letters—to Swift?

DINGLEY.

Aye—a dozen of 'em—I've held 'em in my two hands—.

STELLA.

No—no—I'll not believe—I'll not believe—*[yet showing she DOES.]*

DINGLEY.

Ford saw 'em, too—the dozen of 'em—.

STELLA.

Ford saw? *[Falling on settee to rock back and forth with tears.]*

DINGLEY.

[Distracted with remorse, kneeling beside her.] Child—
child—Listen to me—'twas all a lie—.

STELLA.

Ah—Swift is false to me—.

DINGLEY.

Nay—listen. 'Tis a lie—.

STELLA.

False to me—.

DINGLEY.

[*Seizing STELLA's hands.*] Listen, child. [*STELLA pauses to listen.*] 'Twas all a lie—a lie—There were NO letters—.

STELLA.

DINGLEY!!!

DINGLEY.

I swear it—not a single letter—. 'Twas a wicked lie—.

STELLA.

[*Mopping her eyes.*] Ah—thou jealous Dingley—.

DINGLEY.

My little Stella—poor lamb—Canst forgive me?

STELLA.

[*Sweetly, kissing her.*] Yes—I can—I do—Ah—thou naughty Dingley—.

DINGLEY.

[*Humbly, kissing her hand.*] Sweet child—.

[*Through door 1 ESTHER enters, followed by JEEMS still carrying the letters. JEEMS remains near door 1. ESTHER comes slowly down with faltering step and dreamy look, pausing near the reading-desk.*]

STELLA.

[*To DINGLEY, pointing to ESTHER, with a look of suspicion.*] Dingley—.

DINGLEY.

[*Her face wearing the same look.*] Aye, aye—[*taking her place behind STELLA with set lips.*]

STELLA.

[*Coldly, distinctly.*] Madam?

ESTHER.

[*Startled look toward settee.*] Ah—!

STELLA.

Madam, your name?

ESTHER.

[*Timidly.*] 'Tis Esther Van Homrigh—.

STELLA.

[*To DINGLEY.*] 'TIS SHE! [DINGLEY *nods.*]

ESTHER.

And, madam—yours?

STELLA.

[*Proudly.*] 'Tis Stella Johnson—!

ESTHER.

[*With startled look, to herself.*] 'TIS SHE!

STELLA.

And—your errand here?

ESTHER.

[*Pleadingly.*] 'Tis to see the Dean—.

STELLA.

To see the Dean? And why, madam?

ESTHER.

Because—ah, madam—for two happy years Swift made our house his home—. He—that had the world for his friends—condescended to be friend to me—. Is't any wonder that I learned to love him? I love him still and have severed ties of home and kindred—.

STELLA.

[*With scorn.*] To follow him to Dublin?

ESTHER.

To the world's end if need be! Ah, madam—[*taking poem from her bosom*] this poem—written to me two short months ago—[*Reading the poem with tearful emotion.* STELLA listens with growing belief in SWIFT's falseness. DINGLEY with a grim smile.]

“Would from her height of youth and beauty
Stoop low to weary pilgrim's hand
My lady fair? For wifely duty
Leave all this world can give,
At my command?”

STELLA.

[*Brokenly.*] For wifely duty!!!

DINGLEY.

Aye—didn't I warn ye?

ESTHER.

[*Kissing and replacing the poem.* SWIFT enters door 3. His beaming look changes to a heavy frown as he pauses there. DINGLEY alone sees him. She utters a low, scornful laugh.] Ah, madam, isn't it proof that Swift loves me? But there are ties that bind him to another—.

STELLA.

[*With tears.*] And if those ties were broken—?

ESTHER.

[*Kneeling and pressing STELLA's dress to her lips, her face radiant.*] Ah—madam—ah-h—.

STELLA.

[*Now discovering SWIFT as he comes down. Looking at him, but speaking to ESTHER.*] Then, madam, from this moment Swift is free—! [*Rising and turning to DINGLEY with extended arms.*] Dingley—Dingley—.

[*ESTHER rises slowly, sees SWIFT and retreats to rear with affrighted looks. JEEMS nears her protectingly. SWIFT ignores ESTHER all through scene.*]

DINGLEY.

[*Taking STELLA to her bosom and glaring over her head at SWIFT.*] My poor lamb—.

SWIFT.

[*Sternly, to STELLA.*] Stella—[*Moving toward her.*]

STELLA.

[*With tears.*] Don't touch me—don't touch me—.

SWIFT.

STELLA—!

STELLA.

Dingley, take me away—away—.

DINGLEY.

Fear naught, child. Dingley is here to protect you!

SWIFT.

Since when, Mistress Dingley, hath it been needful to “protect” a woman in the Deanery of Swift?

DINGLEY.

Ask her—your Lunnun charmer—.

SWIFT.

So then—ye’ve lured yonder girl across the channel to tell a tale that is but half the truth? [*Signs of agony showing.*]

DINGLEY.

She came hersel’—to demand the keepin’ o’ your promises—!

SWIFT.

Promises—PROMISES? [*Suddenly flinging up his arms with wild look.*]

STELLA.

Ah, then—deny her story—. Say that you did not write the poem—.

SWIFT.

Ha ha ha—Deny it? [*Superbly.*] Why should I? ’Twas writ—like a thousand others, to the beauties o’ the English court—. Was missing Maid o’ Honor? Find her in the arms of Swift—. Was wanted faithless wife? Ha ha—seek her in the lodgin’s o’ the Dean—.

DINGLEY.

Aye—aye—Quane’s bed-chamber—Quane’s bed-chamber—. [*To STELLA, leading her to left.*] Come away, child—.

SWIFT.

Aye—aye—[*jeeringly, down front as if alone.*] An honor to be Mistress Swift—an honor—she would have it so.—

STELLA.

[*With appealing arms.*] Swift—dear Swift—.

SWIFT.

Till death do us part—. Her words—her LYING words—.

DINGLEY.

Come away, child—come away to Mistress White—to Lunnun—[*bearing STELLA out at left, the door closing with a slam.*]

SWIFT.

[*Waking to the noise, staring wildly about, then to settee. Suddenly dashing to door 1 he tears it open and stands in the afternoon sunlight peering off under his hand. ESTHER shrinks close to door 2 beside JEEMS. After a moment SWIFT re-enters, comes down front with staring eyes, finger on lips. Then, explosively.*] She's gone—GONE. 'Twas Dingley took her away—Dingley—curse her—!

JEEMS.

[*In low tone, seizing ESTHER's arm.*] Come away, Mistress—.

ESTHER.

[*Watching SWIFT with pitying look.*] No—no—I'll not go—.

JEEMS.

But, Mistress, can't you see that he's mad?

ESTHER.

Mad!!! Ah—'tis what he always feared—. [*Beginning to move toward SWIFT, JEEMS follows closely.*]

SWIFT.

[*Turning, discovering ESTHER as if a stranger. Beckoning her with winning smile.*] Come hither, madam—who are you and what do you here?

JEEMS.

[*Holding ESTHER back.*] Mistress Esther—.

SWIFT.

Come—I say—[*ESTHER snatches the letters from JEEMS and approaches SWIFT with sweetly pitying look. SWIFT takes her hand.*] Your name, Madam—[*Soft tones of organ begin.*]

ESTHER.

'Tis Esther Van Homrigh. [SWIFT'S sudden recoil shows his mind is clearing.]

JEEMS.

[*Loudly.*] Mistress—Beware—Beware—.

SWIFT.

Esther Van Homrigh? Aye—so 'tis [*with infinite sarcasm.*] And what sees your fine ladyship in wretched Dublin?

ESTHER.

[*Tenderly.*] 'Twas to see the Dean—'tis now to comfort him—.

SWIFT.

[*Towering above her.*] So, madam. You've not only crossed the channel in pursuit of me but have forced my gates as well? [*Forcing her to her knees.*] You have dared—DARED—.

ESTHER.

[*With terrified look and loosened hair, holding up letters.*] 'Twas to ask the question that's written here—
Swift—Swift—.

SWIFT.

[*Snatching letters and flinging them broadcast. JEEMS comes and gathers them up quickly.*] The question? 'Tis answered. [*Grandly, thinking JEEMS is PATRICK. Pointing to RIGHT.*] Patrick—summon madam's coach—. Escort her to my gate—[*Voices of choristers faintly heard. SWIFT catches the sounds, moves to reading-desk and begins to beat time with happy smile. JEEMS half-carries ESTHER out door 1.*]

CHORISTERS.

[*Faintly chanting beyond door 3. SWIFT's lips move as if repeating the words.*]

O—praise the Lord—praise the L-o-r-d—
Show yourselves joyful to the L-o-r-d—.

SWIFT.

[*Beating time and now chanting with the others.*]

Set me a seal upon mine arm—mine arm—
A seal—a seal upon mine heart—.
For love—for love is strong as death—
As strong as d-e-a-t-h—
For l-o-v-e i-s s-t-r-o-n-g—.

[*Voices die away as SWIFT wakes to anguish.*]

"For love is strong as death—" God—oh God—[*falling face down at reading-desk.*]

FORD.

[*Enters door 3 with beaming smile. Discovering SWIFT.*] Swift—[*thinking him at prayer, pausing. After*

a moment gently touching his arm.] Swift—'tis time for the ceremony—Archbishop waits—. Time for happiness and Stella—.

SWIFT.

[Raising a haggard face.] Stella? Stella's gone—!

FORD.

[Recoiling.] Gone, sir? You mean that—.

SWIFT.

Gone with Dingley—.

FORD.

With Dingley?

SWIFT.

To London—Gone from me—forever! *[Again falling face down at reading-desk as FORD retreats to right to stand, his face on his arm against the wall.]*

[Distant sounds, the same rollicking melody, cheers and cries of "The DEAN"—"Lord Mayor-r—"—"Freedom of C-i-t-y—." DELANY, his friends and the LORD MAYOR in his robes of state, bearing a large golden key on a crimson velvet cushion, enters door 1, the green-coated band playing and a cheering crowd of citizens beyond door. DELANY again intent on ranging his friends against the rear wall. SWIFT'S posture is taken by all to mean that he is in prayer till FORD crosses, points to SWIFT and whispers the truth. DELANY whispers the truth to those near him, the LORD MAYOR gets it, DELANY signals to the band, the crowd beyond. The animated picture becomes a silent tableau as—.]

CURTAIN.

End of Act Fourth.

EPILOGUE.

SITTING-ROOM OF THE DEANERY OF ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL. *Twenty-five years later. Late afternoon of an autumn day.*

[*The sitting-room shows the marks of time. Chairs set primly against the rear wall. The silken curtains, frayed and faded, drawn apart over the empty bookshelves. The flag with the letter T still hangs on the wall, its colors faded. Table now at back-centre, bare of all but a green-shaded lamp. SWIFT'S chair is at right, its crimson faded. The two-paned window over door 1 is open and shows a bit of blue sky. All doors closed.*]

[FORD, richly but sombrely dressed, his hair silvered at the temples and his face older, sits at the table reading a book. PATRICK is entering from door 3 a second green-shaded lamp in hand. PATRICK'S hair is silvered though his cheeks are still ruddy. He walks with the slouching gait of the old peasant as he crosses to place the lamp on the mantel-shelf, turning its wick up and down in childish pleasure, finally moving off to idly flick the chairs with his red cotton handkerchief. After a moment distant music is heard. PATRICK listens with childish delight.]

FORD.

[*Looking up.*] Hark, Patrick—.

PATRICK.

[*Rubbing his hands with glee.*] Aye, Masther Ford—
An' they'll be lightin' the bonfires soon—.

FORD.

[*Sadly.*] Swift's birthday which Dublin's honored these many years—. [*Sighing.*] Any letters to answer, Patrick?

PATRICK.

Nary wan, sor. Sure, the Dane's friends ha' all forsaken him—.

FORD.

But five-an-twenty years make great changes, Patrick—. How is the Dean this afternoon? Any clearer in mind?

PATRICK.

No. He's sittin' wi' his head on his breast as he's sat these five years—thinkin' av nothin'—[*After a moment.*] Those mad fits, sor—.

FORD.

Heaven grant they trouble him no more. [*Reading again.*]

PATRICK.

[*Coming down, eagerly.*] When the Dane's gone am to ring Cathedral bell, sor?

FORD.

[*Discarding book to walk about. After a moment.*] Yes.

PATRICK.

[*Rubbing his hands with glee.*] A pull for every year, sor—That'll make seventy shrokes, do'ent they, Masther Ford?

FORD.

[*After a moment.*] Yes, Patrick, seventy strokes—
[*Looking at his watch.*] Five o'clock. The people will soon be here. Bring the Dean in, as usual, and place him in his chair.

PATRICK.

Yes, sor [*Slouching out door 3.*]
[*FORD returns to read his book. Then a bronzed and bearded man in travelling dress enters door 1 without knocking. FORD looks up at him as at a stranger, rising with a smile.*]

RICHARD HAYS.

[*Coming quickly forward with extended hand and genial smile.*] Ah, Ford—.

FORD.

[*Taking the hand.*] Yes? And—you?

RICHARD.

[*With a deep laugh.*] Richard Hays—at your service—.

FORD.

[*Surprised, smiling.*] Indeed? From London?

RICHARD.

Aha—now of America—[*taking the chair that FORD indicates, tossing his hat on table and sitting at ease.*]
Richard Hays—the irritable puppy of other days—ha ha—who “exiled” himself—~~himself~~ for a woman’s sake—. But—ha ha—I met another and a fairer Esther who’s now the happy mother of sons and daughters—You also married, Ford?

FORD.

[*Gravely, after a moment.*] No. When did you arrive?

RICHARD.

But yesterday—after a voyage of many weeks. [*Looking round.*] And—the Dean—how is he?

FORD.

You've surely heard—?

RICHARD.

Ha ha—there are no post-offices on an American plantation. But from the bonfires—the green flags—Swift's name on every lip—.

FORD.

Swift's birthday, which Dublin's celebrated these five-and-twenty years.

RICHARD.

Ah—Swift was ever a genius—though to my young eyes—[*A pause. With regret.*] Five-and-twenty years have carried off my London friends. My aunt—little Molly—[*rising and walking about. Abruptly.*] I heard but once from my cousin Esther—. Swift killed her as surely as if he'd put a bullet into her heart—.

FORD.

Yet the Dean paid the highest price of all—.

RICHARD.

Mistress Stella—.

FORD.

When the Deanery gates closed upon her—[*silent.*]

RICHARD.

And—the Dean?

FORD.

Devoted himself to his country's welfare—Till—a sudden darkness—.

RICHARD.

A—sudden darkness? You mean—?

[FORD points to right where PATRICK is leading the DEAN in. SWIFT is the shadow of his former self. Shrunk form, lustreless eyes, his snowy hair falling to his shoulders. In black cassock and linen bands. In his right hand he carries a white handkerchief. PATRICK the awe of "the masther" absent, places SWIFT in his chair and moves to rear, beginning to flick the chairs with his handkerchief. SWIFT's head begins to roll from side to side, his eyes closed, on his forehead a querulous frown.]

FORD.

[Moving to SWIFT and gently brushing a silver lock from his brow. Not lowering his voice.] Come nearer, Richard—.

RICHARD.

[Moving to SWIFT, his face showing his amaze, regret. Lowering his voice.] God—what a change is here—what a change. For how long?

FORD.

[Not lowering his voice.] These five years past—.

RICHARD.

He remembers nothing of the past?

FORD.

Try him and see.

RICHARD.

Swift—'Tis Richard Hays—[SWIFT makes no sign.] Forgotten!

FORD.

[*As if addressing SWIFT.*] As is the name of—MISTRESS STELLA! [SWIFT makes no sign. The rollicking melody of other days and the cheering voices reach to beyond door 1.]

RICHARD.

[*Frowning.*] That uproar—

FORD.

He hears it not—

[PATRICK hurries to FORD and points to the head and shoulders of a man rising within the two-paned window, a wreath in one hand, a page of printed matter in the other. FORD beckons RICHARD to stand with him beyond SWIFT'S chair. Man at window pantomimes to those below for silence. Reading from page.]

Fellow-citizens, we are gathered here today to celebrate the birthday of the man—who—these many years—has fought and won for us so many civic victories. A strong soul—a brilliant mind—a tender heart. Fellow-citizens, time may come and time may go—but the name of Jonathan Swift will not only adorn the pages of History—but will be enshrined within every Irish heart—FOREVER.

[*Wild cheers without.* FORD crosses to left, man in window drops the wreath into his hand, pantomiming incidents within to those outside. FORD places the wreath on the twist at the back of SWIFT'S chair, where it forms a "halo" for his snowy head. Loud cries of "The D-A-N-E—"]

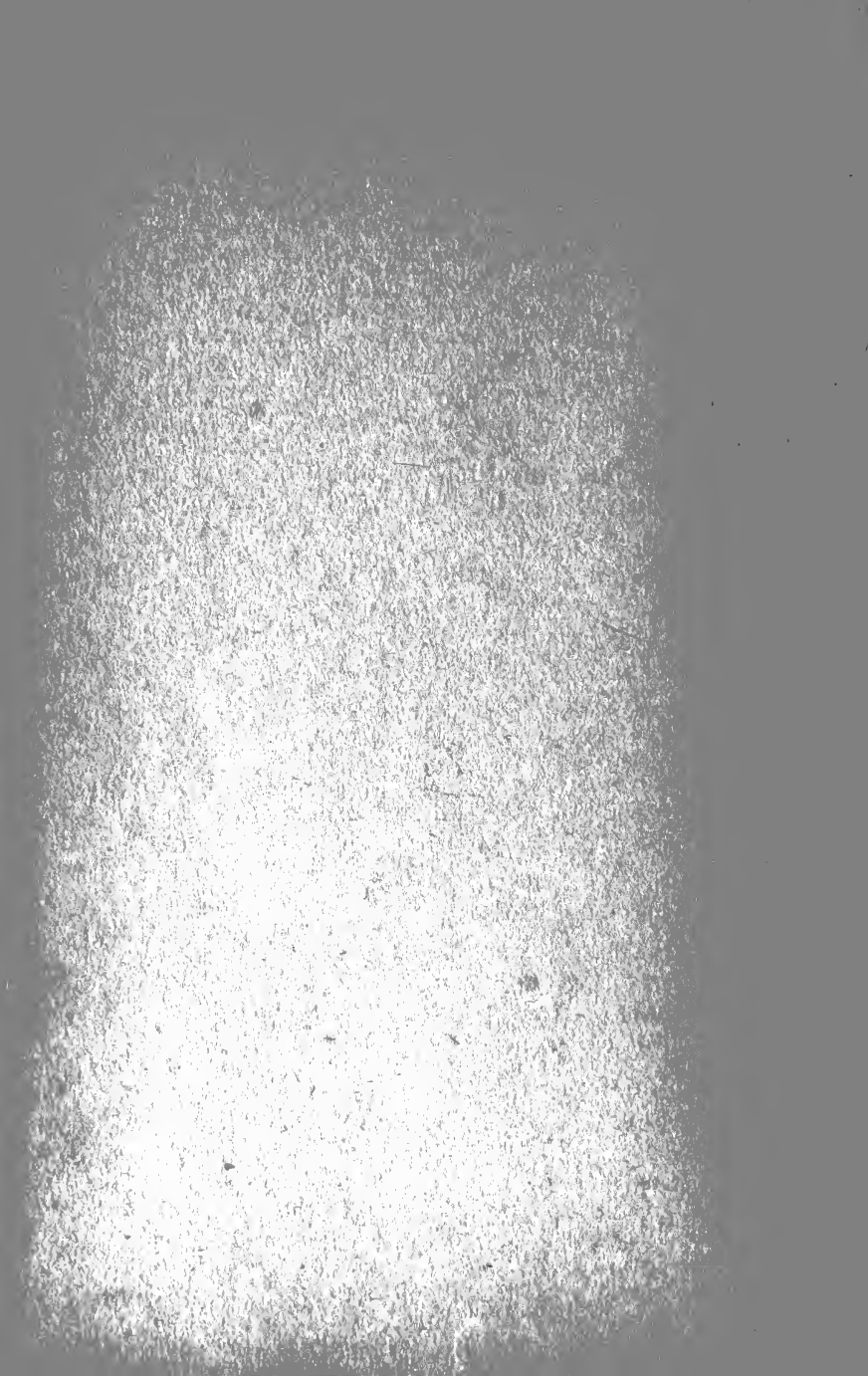
A VOICE OUTSIDE.

[*Vibrant, like a trumpet-call.*] Swift—Swift—VIVA SWIFT—S-P-E-E-C-H—

[SWIFT'S eyes open suddenly, his head stops rolling, he shows that he hears the call. FORD, RICHARD and PATRICK draw nearer. SWIFT struggles to rise, his glance up at the window, he rises, raises his hand with the authority of other days—makes an effort to speak—suddenly collapses into chair, the hand holding the handkerchief falls from his breast. Man at window drops out of sight, the music and cheers fade. SWIFT'S eyes close, his head ceases to roll, the handkerchief drops from his hand. PATRICK whispers to FORD, who nods, PATRICK slouches quickly out of door 3. FORD and RICHARD draw nearer. SWIFT'S face changes to a look of peace. Deep booming of Cathedral bell as—.]

CURTAIN.

END OF THE PLAY.





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